This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07605490 1

PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY

"Now your finger-print, if you please"

The Messenger

By

Elizabeth Robins
Author of "Come and Find Me," etc.

With Illustrations by
George Giguére

New York
The Century Co.
1919

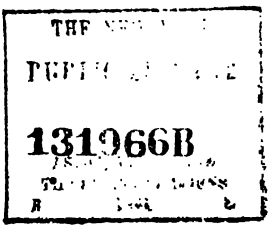
Copyright, 1919, by
ELIZABETH ROBINS

Copyright, 1918, 1919, by
THE CENTURY CO.

Published, September, 1919

F

TO
S. C.


THE
PUBLIC
131966B

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
"Now your finger-print, if you please" . .	*Frontispiece*
"O Gavan, save me!"	198
"I have a cabin below. I place it at the lady's disposal"	369
"The name of the man in the War Office!"	414

THE MESSENGER

PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY

THE MESSENGER

CHAPTER I

"AFTER all, we are n't *yet* living in the millennium, Julian. What I 'm afraid of is that some day you 'll be wanting to carry these notions of yours beyond the bounds of what 's reasonable."

"You mean," said the other young man, with a flash in his dark eyes, "you mean you 're afraid I may just chance to be honest in my 'notions,' as you call them, of a scheme of social justice."

As far off as you saw Gavan Napier, you knew him as a scion not only of the governing class, but in all likelihood of one of the governing families. Exactly the sort of man, you would say, to have Eton and Balliol in the past, a present as unpaid, private secretary to a member of his Majesty's Government, and a future in which the private secretary himself would belong to officialdom and employ pleasant, more or less accomplished, and more rather than less idle, young gentlemen to take down occasional notes, write an occasional letter, and see a boring constituent.

It was no boring constituent he was seeing now, out of those cool blue eyes of his, yet he followed with evident dissatisfaction the figure of a woman who had appeared an instant over the sand-dunes and who, as Napier turned

to look at her instead of at his ball, changed her tack and sauntered inland.

"What do you suppose she 's always hanging about for?" Napier asked his companion.

"As if you did n't know!"

"Well, if *you* do," retorted Napier, "I wish you 'd tell me."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. You 're quite conceited enough." Julian shouldered his golf clubs (it was against his principles to employ a caddie) and trudged on at the side of his unencumbered friend. The eyes of both followed the lady disappearing among the dunes.

"I 've seen her only two or three times," Julian said, "but I 've seen she has n't eyes for anybody except you."

"*That 's* far from being so," Napier retorted. "But if it were, I should know the reason."

"Of course you do."

"But *you* don't," Napier still insisted. "The reason is I 'm the only person in the house who is n't Miss von Schwarzenberg's slave."

"Oh! I took her at first for just a governess."

"She 's a lot besides that!" Napier wagged his head in a curiosity-provoking way.

"There 's been so much to talk about since I got back," Julian went on, "or else I 've been meaning to ask about her."

"She interests you?" Napier asked a little sharply.

"I confess," said Julian, "I have n't understood her position at the McIntyres."

"If *I* have n't — it is n't from lack of data. Only,"— Napier wrinkled his fine brows — "did you ever know a

person that nothing you know about them seems to fit? That is n't grammar, but it 's my feeling about that young woman."

The two played a very evenly matched game. As they walked side by side after their balls, Julian wondered from time to time whether the subject of Miss von Schwarzenberg had been introduced to prevent his reverting to that vision of his — all the clearer since his tour round the world — of a reconstituted society in which vested privilege should no longer have a leg to stand on. Or could it be that Gavan was seriously intrigued by the Rhine maiden who, more or less as a special favor, had consented to superintend the studies and to share the recreations of "that handful," Madge McIntyre, aged sixteen? This girl, with the boyish face and boyish tastes and boyish clothes (whose mane of flaming hair had helped to fasten on her the nickname of Wildfire McIntyre), Julian already knew slightly as the only and much-spoiled daughter of Napier's chief. Sir William McIntyre, K. C. B., adviser to the Admiralty and laird of Kirklamont, had been the notable chairman of endless shipping companies and prime promoter of numberless commercial enterprises, until he accepted a seat in the cabinet, a man of vigor and some originality of mind, in contrast to his wife — a brainless butterfly of a woman who complained bitterly that she had less trouble with her four sons than with her one daughter. The one daughter, by ill luck, had an inconvenient share of her father's force of character. She had ruled the house of McIntyre till the advent of the lady in question.

That lady's predecessor had been a Miss Gayne. Miss Gayne had been in possession till a fateful morning last

summer when Madge, driving along the coast road, came in sight of Glenfallon Castle, and pulled up her pony with a jerk that nearly precipitated poor Miss Gayne out of the cart. "My goodness gracious, the Duke is back!"

Glenfallon, on its cliff above the Firth, commanded a view north and south over the many-bayed and channeled mainland, out over rocky islets — shining jewels of jacinth and jasper and azurite, spilled haphazard into the sea — clear away to that great gray expanse miscalled by the new governess the German Ocean. Nobody had lived at Glenfallon as long as Madge could remember, so that she might perhaps be pardoned for emitting that excited scream at sight of two young men in tennis flannels busying themselves about the net.

"We must n't sit here staring at them," Miss Gayne remonstrated.

Miss Gayne picked up the reins which Madge had let fall. Madge seized them with an impatient "Don't!" and flung them round the whip.

"It is n't proper to sit like this, staring into a stranger's tennis court. At two strange young men, too!"

"I 'm only staring at one. You can have the other."

Presently a tennis ball came over the wall and bounced into the road. Before Miss Gayne could remonstrate, Madge was out of the cart and had sent the ball hurtling back.

The younger man caught it, and the elder advanced to the wall to thank the young lady. He was a very good specimen of fair, broad-shouldered, blunt-featured manhood, but when he opened his mouth he spoke with a foreign accent.

"When are you expecting him?" demanded Madge.

"Expecting whom? We are not expecting anybody, I'm afraid, and the more pleased to see *you.*" He made his quick little bow and turned to present his brother. "This is Ernst Pforzheim and I am Carl."

Madge nodded, deliberately ignoring Miss Gayne's hurried approach and disapproving presence.

"How do you do? Have you bought Glenfallon?"

No, they had only leased it. They hoped the change and quiet might do their father some good. He had n't been well ever since . . . ever since they lost their mother.

"We have great hopes of this fine air and perfect quiet," said the elder. "The quiet is the very thing for our father — but for us it may become a little *triste.* So we play tennis. Do you play tennis, Miss . . . a . . . Miss . . .?"

"Do I play tennis?" Madge did not long leave any doubt on that score.

The adventure was not smiled on at home, but poor Miss Gayne got all the blame.

There was a touch of irony in the lady's being succeeded by some one recommended by, or at least through, these very undesirable and undoubtedly foreign acquaintances.

The same success which the Pforzheim young men had with their country neighbors generally, they had with Madge. Everybody seemed to like them. Lady McIntyre liked them from the first. "Such charming manners! And so devoted to their poor father!"

With his pleasant malice Napier described the Pforzheims at Kirklamont, and Lady McIntyre's graciousness that "'*so* hoped to make your father's acquaintance.'"

The Pforzheims shook their heads over the poor gentleman's condition, "'confined to a darkened room.'"

"'But we heard that he was out yesterday evening, in your new steam launch.'

"'Ah! that . . . yes . . . that is because his eyes are very painful. He can't bear the least light. So he gets no exercise and no change of air during the day.'

"'Well, in that case of course he could n't expect to sleep!' And then Lady McIntyre had an inspiration. 'Does n't it sound,' she appealed to Sir William, 'extremely like the kind of insomnia Lord Grantbury suffers from? I believe it 's the very identical same. And Lord Grantbury has found a cure.'

"Great sensation on the part of the Pforzheims. Oh, *would* Lady McIntyre tell them. . . . They 'd be eternally grateful if she would only get Lord Grantbury's prescription. But Lady McIntyre could produce it at once. She did produce it. And what did Julian think it was?"

Julian shook his head. He knew quite well now that Arthur was telling him this yarn in order to avoid reopening the subject of their disagreement — the only one in their lives. So he bore with hearing that Lord Grantbury's remedy for insomnia was a combination of motion and absence of daylight. Lord Grantbury had contended that light was a strong excitant. That the consciousness of being seen, of having to acknowledge recognition, or even of knowing your label was being clapped on your back — all that was disturbing in certain states of health. "'So he has himself driven out, they say, about eleven o'clock at night in a sixty-horsepower car, and goes whizzing along lonely roads where there 's no fear of police

traps, as hard as he can lick. When he comes back, he finds that all that ozone, and whatever it is, has quieted him. He sleeps like a top.' The sons were advised to put Father Pforzheim in a Rolls-Royce car and see what would happen. 'You have n't got a high power car? Till they can send for one,'— Lady McIntyre appealed to her husband —' don't you think, William, we might —?'

"But Carl, profuse in thanks, said that unfortunately his father had a nervous abhorrence of motor cars.

"'How very strange!' said Lady McIntyre.

"'No, it was n't at all strange. My mother,' — Carl dropped his eyes and compressed his full lips — 'our dear mother was killed in a motor accident.'

"'But our father,' — Ernst looked up as he brushed a white, triple-ringed hand across his eyes —' our father finds the water soothing. After all, Carl, swift motion on the water, why should n't that do as well as racing along a road?'

"'*And* darkness,' said Lady McIntyre.

"'*And* darkness!' the brothers echoed her together. 'We can never thank you enough, Lady McIntyre. We will persevere with your friend Lord Grantbury's remedy.'" The brothers clicked their heels and pressed their lips to her hand and left her in a flutter. The poor young men's anxiety was most touching! Especially Carl's. Lady McIntyre, according to Napier, doted on Carl. He was n't so taken up by his filial preoccupations either, that he could n't sympathize with the anxiety of a mother. Lady McIntyre's about Madge. Mr. Carl agreed that Miss Gayne was *not* the person. He had seen that at once. No influence whatever. Miss McIntyre was a very charming

young lady. Full of character. Fire, too. She required special handling.

"'Ah! how well you understand! Now, what do you advise me to do? Seeing you reminds me,' Lady McIntyre said with her infantile candor, 'that we've never tried a German governess. We've had so many French ones. And quite an army of English and Scotch —'

"'Ah! a German governess!'"—he pulled at his mustache. Mr. Pforzheim promised to consult his aunt. The widow of a Heidelberg professor.

By a special providence Frau Lenz knew of a young lady who was at that moment in London, on her way home from America. She would be the very person to consult.

"She was the very person to *get*," Lady McIntyre said, when she came back from interviewing the paragon. "And, Heaven be praised, I've got her!"

They had gone back to London on account of that commission Sir William had insisted on having appointed. There were a lot of people in London that July, and things going on. Madge in the thick of everything, as though she'd been twenty-five instead of fifteen. That's how the von Schwarzenberg found her, neglecting lessons, ignoring laws, living at the theater, figuring at her father's official parties, sitting up till all hours of the night, smoking cigarettes till her fingers looked as if she'd been shelling green walnuts, gossiping, arguing, on every subject under the sun. That's the situation to which Miss von Schwarzenberg was introduced as the latest in a long and sorry line.

Napier had watched the transformation.

"They've raised the Schwarzenberg's salary twice." She had subdued every member of the minister's household.

"Not you, I hope?" Julian said quickly.

Napier laughed. "*She* would set your mind at rest on that score. Only the other day she got me into a corner. 'What have you got against me, Mr. Napier?' she said. 'You don't like me.' It took me so by surprise, I stammered: '*I*? . . . What an idea!' '*Why* don't you like me, Mr. Napier?' Mercifully just then Wildfire McIntyre flamed across our path."

CHAPTER II

WHEN the young men reached Kirklamont, the McIntyres were already gathered about the tea-table in the hall of the big, ugly, Scotch country house. "The family" consisted at the moment only of three, the fourth person present being Miss von Schwarzenberg, for it was mid-July. In another month the absent sons (two soldiers and a sailor) would come up for the shooting and bring their friends.

All this presupposed — as nobody found the least difficulty in doing — that Sir William's recent "little heart attack" would leave no legacy more destructive of the usual routine than abandonment of London a fortnight or so earlier than had been planned. A more acute anxiety might have touched Lady McIntyre had her husband not deliberately thrown her off the track. He dubbed the great specialist "a verra reasonable fella," who did n't make a mountain out of a molehill. The patient did not add the means by which he had been coerced into turning his back on public affairs at a moment made so critical for the Government by Irish affairs.

"A break in the London strain, at once and often, or else smash."

That was the dour deliverance which had installed the McIntyres in their beloved Kirklamont two weeks earlier than they could have hoped. It was a party which, with

a single exception (again Miss von Schwarzenberg), had shaken off London by every token of tweed garment, stout boots, of golf stockings, and of gaiters.

Cup in hand, Sir William, as became the head of the house, stood planted on wide-apart legs in front of the fireplace — a sanguine-colored, plump, little partridge of a man with a kind, rather *rusé* face.

Lady McIntyre, behind the urn — fair, fluffy-haired, blue-eyed — looked, as such women will, far older in the country than she did in her "London clothes." But she was far too correct not to make any sacrifice called for by the unwritten law of her kind. Behold her, therefore, bereft of all fripperies save the dangling diamond earrings, which emphasized painfully an excuse for frivolity which had been outlived. To tell the blunt truth, Lady McIntyre looked like some shrunken little duenna, attendant on the opulent majesty of the heavy-braided, ox-eyed Juno at her side. For Miss von Schwarzenberg shared the High Seat — otherwise Lady McIntyre's carved settle. At her feet sat Madge, her pupil, and an Aberdeen terrier.

"You *really!*" — the high-pitched excitement in the girl's voice reached the young men depositing their golf clubs and caps in the lobby — "you really and truly want to learn golf — *after all?*"

"If nobody has any objection," a voice answered, in an accent very slightly foreign, and to the English ear suggesting, as much as anything, Western American.

"Objection! Quite the contrary. Capital idea!" Sir William spoke heartily.

Bobby, fourteen but looking nearer eighteen, spilled

over and sprawled out of an armchair as he beat the arm, and cried out with animation and a mouth full of griddle cake, "Bags I teach you, Fräulein!"

"I hope you 've been taking it out of Gavan," Sir William had called out by way of greeting to Julian. Julian played up by proceeding to describe with mock braggadoccio how he 'd completely taken the shine out of the champion. That person, handing tea, contented himself with privately observing yet again how his friend, long and lithe and dark, offered to the rotund little figure of the eminent official a contrast that ministered pleasantly to a sense of the ludicrous. Sir William's bald bullet head barely reached the height of Julian's chest. But it was notorious — and Napier had not worked for two years with Sir William without finding good reason to share the prevalent opinion — that inside the aforesaid bullet was an uncommon amount of shrewd sense and a highly developed skill in organizing power.

Sir William ran his department as he ran his vast commercial enterprises, with an ease that was own child of intelligence of a high degree. But now, as though it were the main factor in life, he talked golf.

The governess, after a perfunctory "how do you do" to the visitor, had leaned over to stroke the Aberdeen. The lady's full-moon face — with its heavy, shapely nose, its smooth apple cheeks, its quiet, beautiful mouth — was bent down till her chin rested on her generous bust. It occurred to Napier that she often adopted this pose. It gave her an air of pensiveness, of submission, the more striking in a person of so much character.

Also, the little tendrils of yellow hair that escaped from

under the Gretchen-like banded braids cast delicate shadows on the whitest neck Napier had ever seen. Oh, she had her points.

"Did you hear, Mr. Grant?" Madge called out. "Miss von Schwarzenberg says now she wants to learn our foolish national game."

"Never!" Julian turned back to the tea-table. His tone was faintly ironic — as though the sensation created by this lady's conversion to golf seemed disproportionate to its importance.

Lady McIntyre lifted her appealing eyes. "I wonder if you 'd be very kind, Mr. Grant, and help the children to teach Miss von Schwarzenberg?"

The almost infinitesimal pause was cancelled, obliterated, by Miss von Schwarzenberg's promptitude. "Oh, I could n't think of being such a trouble." She had risen. "Sit here, Mr. Grant," she said. "Yes, *please*. I 've finished." In spite of his protest, she retired to a chair on the far side of the fireplace — Napier's side — and picked up her knitting.

Madge followed, dog-like, and so did the Aberdeen.

"It *is* a comfort," Lady McIntyre went on, "to find such a terribly clever person" — she nodded significantly in the direction of Miss von Schwarzenberg — "taking an interest in the things ordinary mortals care about. It 's been the one fault I 've had to find with Greta. She does n't play games. They don't, you know. But the Germans are a wonderful people! Take this young girl" — she lowered her voice. But, however, little of the conversation was lost on Miss von Schwarzenberg. She knitted steadily. Madge played with the dog.

"Greta's only twenty-five or six," Lady McIntyre went on. "Her father was an officer of Uhlans. An invalid now. And somehow they lost their money. An uncle in America is tremendously rich, and he's had Greta at one of the great women's colleges over there. She insisted on going home every summer . . . *so* domestic, the Germans! I always think it's extremely nice of them to feel affectionate toward such a horrid country as Germany — don't you, Mr. Grant? And such a language to wrestle with, poor things! Do you know, they call a thimble a finger hat? Yes, and a pin a stick needle!"

"Well, well!" — Sir William broke off in the middle of the golf discussion, and rattled his seals with great vigor, as though they were a summons to industry — a simulacrum of factory bell or works whistle. "I must write one more letter. No, I don't need you, Gavan."

"But that translation?"

"It's done."

"Done!" said the astonished Napier.

"And could n't be better," said Sir William, as he disappeared into the library.

"Miss Greta did it!" triumphed Bobby.

"I wonder," said the lady, smiling, "which of you two would go and get me the rest of my wool?"

Bobby was on his feet, staring helplessly round.

"In your work bag?" asked Madge.

Greta nodded, and the two raced each other upstairs. Miss Greta lifted her candid eyes. "Does it require a *great* deal of practice, Mr. Napier, to play golf passably?" She blushed slightly as she went on: "I suppose I've hoped that if I watched you, I'd stand a better chance of

playing a fair game myself some day. Fair, that is," she added, with her meek droop of the braid-crowned head, "fair for a woman."

"I 'm sure you know," Napier returned a little impatiently, "that plenty of women play very well."

"Do you mean," she inquired with her soft persistence, "you 'd ever be so kind as to give me a tip or two?"

He did n't answer at once, and she turned in her chair to look at him. Out from her disarranged cushion rolled a large ball of field gray. It bumped against Napier's ankle and rebounded to the wall.

"Is n't this the wool you were looking for?" He took it up by the loose end, and rapidly unrolled several yards of it.

"Thank you *so* much! I can't think how it got down here." She took the ball from him, and remained standing while she rewound. "After all, I sha'n't much more than have time to get on my things." She glanced at the clock.

"Where are you going?" Lady McIntyre asked the question from habit. Seldom was Greta allowed to leave the room without that question.

"You were so kind as to say I might have the cart."

"Oh, yes," Lady McIntyre remembered.

"What for?" asked Bobby, tumbling downstairs. "Want to be driven somewhere? Bags I —"

"Certainly *not!*" Madge called out to him. And then in a markedly different tone, "I 've turned everything out of . . . Oh, you 've got it!"

It was all right, Miss Greta said comprehensively. She would go to the station alone.

"Oh, *please* let me come!" Madge begged.

Miss von Schwarzenberg shook her head. Madge looked at her wistfully. "I *wish* she was n't coming!" Then with a gleam, "I believe you do too!"

Miss von Schwarzenberg smiled.

"Who is it?" demanded Bobby.

"Oh, a little American friend of mine. A girl I went to school with."

"Her name 's Nan Ellis," Madge informed the company gloomily, "and she 's not much to look at, and not at all rich, and not much of anything that I can discover. Just a millstone round Miss Greta's neck."

"We must n't say *that.*" Miss Greta was winding the last couple of yards. "You see, she 's an orphan, and I rather took her under my wing at school — poor child!"

Bobby asked if the American was going to stay with us.

"Oh, no," said the wool winder, now at the end of her task. "At the inn, of course." Miss Greta glanced again at the clock as she gathered up her knitting.

"Cart was n't ordered till six," Madge threw in. "Don't you mean to bring her here at all?"

"I should be delighted. But — I can't flatter myself that my little friend would interest *you.*" She swept the circle. "Quite a *nice* girl, but . . . (a deprecatory wave of one hand), "well, crude. Western, you know. She has grown used to looking to me for the summer. I tried to explain that — " the pause was eloquent of a delicate desire to spare feelings — "that I was n't taking a holiday myself this year. But," — on her way out of the hall Miss Greta laughed over her shoulder — "she 's not perhaps so very quick at — how do you say it? — not so quick

at the uptake." She turned at the sound of a motor car rushing up the drive.

Through the open lobby doors a girl was seen rising from her seat and scanning Kirklamont Hall with a slight frown. As the car swerved round to the entrance she called out to the chauffeur in a voice of appalling distinctness, and most unmistakably transatlantic: "Are you sure this is the place? It is n't *my* idea of a . . . *Oh!*" She had given one glance through the lobby and was out of the car as a bird goes over a hedge. "It is! It is!" — The girl stood in the hall, holding out her hands, "*Greta!*"

"My *dear* Nan!" Miss von Schwarzenberg had hastened forward, more flurried than anybody there had ever seen her.

"Oh, my!" said the newcomer with a face of rapture. "Oh, *my!*" and she fell to hugging Miss von Schwarzenberg.

Bobby sat contorting his long legs and arms with unregenerate glee at Fräulein's struggle to be cordial and at the same time to disengage herself as rapidly as possible.

Lady McIntyre left her settle and pattered forward with hospitable intent. An instant of indecision on Miss von Schwarzenberg's part, and then Miss Ellis was duly presented.

She was n't nearly so tall as Napier had thought her when she stood up in the car. This was because the figure was slight and extremely erect. For the rest, a small head, overweighted with a profusion of bright, brown hair; a rather childish face under a little golden-brown hat, guiltless of trimming but for the two brown wings

ness, and bowed low over Lady McIntyre's hand: "My father has sent you those Russian boarhounds he promised. Ernst has got them outside" — he stood back in that *empressé* way of his that seemed to say, "My manners are far too perfect not to suffer others to precede." And the others, in the careless English way, *did* precede. They even blocked up the entrance, leaving Mr. Carl and his politeness in the rear. This manœuver so obstructed the view that Miss Ellis rose and came a few paces nearer, hoping for a better sight of those exciting animals. Napier, glancing back, saw that Miss von Schwarzenberg sat perfectly still.

"Did you ever see boarhounds before, Greta? I never did."

What Greta answered, Napier did n't hear; but the moment was not lost upon him when, all view of the spectacle being quite shut out by the crowding at the door, Miss Ellis' attention — about to return to the tea-table — "caught," as it were, on Carl Pforzheim's profile.

"Why, how do you do?" she said with a quick turn. "I 'm very glad to meet you."

Carl Pforzheim stared. Miss von Schwarzenberg shot forward and took Nan by the arm.

"In the midst of all the masses of strangers I 've been seeing, you seem like an old friend. Tell him, Greta —" At sight of Miss von Schwarzenberg's face, she stopped short.

"I think you are making some mistake," said Mr. Carl.

"Oh, no, I 'm not!" that terribly "carrying" voice went on. "It 's because Greta has told me such a great deal about you. And you 're exactly like your picture,

down to the cleft in your chin — " The girl hesitated again as Greta mumbled, and Pforzheim, with a desperate, "I must help my brother," forgot all his fine manners and pushed his way out.

"What 's the matter, dearest? Ought n't I to have said that?" Then in a half whisper: "I never mentioned Ernst. And, after all, it was only Ernst that you — "

"*Will* you be quiet?"

In another ten seconds they were whirling away in the car.

. . . . . .

Napier walked half-way home with Grant as usual. He was amused at Julian's indignation over the von Schwarzenberg's patronage of her "little friend." And then they quarreled a little over Napier's decision that it was cheek for a girl to come "winged like Mercury." Julian defended her. He 'd never seen a hat he liked better. It just suited that face of hers.

"'That face!'" Napier mocked. "I suppose, out of pure contentiousness, you 'll be saying it 's pretty."

"'Pretty!' Pretty faces are cheap. That one has got the fineness of a wood anemone. And the faith of a St. Francis. Did you ever *see* such faith in any pair of eyes? Ye gods! If I could believe in life as that child does, if I were as serenely sure of everybody's good will," — he threw out his walking-stick at the prison wall between him and such freedoms, such innocent securities. "It 's pathetic — a person like that. Think of the knocks she 'll get. Think — "

"What I' m thinking of — I can't get it out of my mind! Every time I go back to it, it seems to me stranger

— the expression on the von Schwarzenberg's face when the girl recognized Pforzheim."

"What sort of expression?" said Julian, absently.

"I wish you'd seen it! And the way she looked after Carl with a sort of cowering apology, before she plunged into the car. Now leave off quarreling with me about the Mercury cap, and just tell me: Why the devil should that woman have pretended she'd never seen the Pforzheims before she met them at Kirklamont? I wake up in the middle of the night and ask myself that question."

"How do you know she pretended — ?"

"I was there. I saw them introduced."

CHAPTER III

THAT hall at Kirklamont was for Gavan Napier, as he looked back, forever associated with the most decisive hours in his own fate, as well as that of his closest friend. It meant to him, perhaps more than anything, the abiding memory of that morning after the arrival of Miss Greta's "little friend."

He stood in front of the fireplace, waiting for Andrews to bring in the post. At that particular moment there was n't anybody else in the hall. There probably soon would be somebody, Napier reflected, with a mingled sense of amusement and uneasiness. For this was about the time Miss von Schwarzenberg was astute enough to choose for her little tête-à-têtes with the private secretary — always elaborately accidental. Sir William would be out riding; Lady McIntyre dawdling over her late breakfast, and Madge in the schoolroom, as Napier could all too plainly hear, practising with that new ruthlessness introduced by Miss von Schwarzenberg.

Miss Greta was never so at a loss as to enter without her little excuse, "I think I must have left my knitting." Or, *sans* phrase, she would go to the writing table and consult Whitaker or Bradshaw. There was always a semblance of reasonableness in such preoccupation. For Lady McIntyre had fallen into the habit of going to Miss

Greta for every sort of service, from somebody's official style and title to looking out trains.

It was n't the first, by several score of times, that young ladies had shown themselves fertile in pretexts for a little conversation with Mr. Napier. He himself was not in the least averse, as a rule, to a little harmless flirtation — even with a governess. But suppose this particular young woman should, with the fatal German sentimentality, be really falling in love. One day, as he was sorting the letters, she had stood at the table beside him, *durchblattering* Bradshaw with piteous aimlessness. He suggested: "Shall I look it up for you . . . Where do you want to go?"

With a heave of her high bosom she had answered that sometimes she thought the place she 'd best go to was the bottom of Kirklamont Loch. Only the timely entrance of a servant with a telegram had, Napier felt, saved him from a most inconvenient scene. He reflected anxiously upon the high rate of suicide in Germany. It would be very awful if for sake of his *beaux yeux* Miss Greta should find a watery grave.

He looked at the clock. If the post was late, so was Miss von Schwarzenberg.

Suddenly it came over Napier that she timed these entrances of hers, not according to the clock, and not according to his own movements. He was sometimes twenty minutes waiting there alone for the post to come in.

"God bless my soul!" he ejaculated mentally. Was n't she invariably here about two minutes before Andrews brought in the bag?

Before Napier had time to readjust himself to this new view of the lady's apparent interest in *him* — there she

was! — in her very feminine, rather Londony, clothes; her intensely white, plump neck rising out of a lace blouse; her yellow hair bound in smooth braids round her head; a light dust of pearl powder over her pink cheeks.

She came straight over to the fireplace, "Mr. Napier, I should like to speak to you a moment."

Napier lowered his newspaper, "Yes, Miss von Schwarzenberg."

"I don't know if you gathered yesterday . . . the Pforzheims are old friends of my family."

"Oh?" said Napier.

"Their father and my father were brothers-in-arms," she went on in that heroine-of-melodrama style she sometimes affected. "They have been close friends since their university days."

"Really." Napier's calm seemed to detract from her own.

The color surged into her round cheeks, but she held her head dauntlessly on its short white neck as she confessed, "Carl and Ernst have known me since I was a child."

Napier laid down the newspaper. "Indeed!"

"I suppose," she challenged him, "you think, that being the case, it was very odd we should meet like strangers?"

"Oh, I dare say you had your reasons," he said, as Andrews came in. Napier walked the length of the hall to where the man had put down the bag.

Miss von Schwarzenberg did not move till Andrews had gone out. She did not move even then, until Napier found his keys, selected his duplicate, fitted it to the lock,

and at last threw back the leather flap and drew out the letters.

That instant, as though she had only just resumed control of her self-possession, Miss von Schwarzenberg, handkerchief in hand, moved softly down the hall and stood at Napier's side. It came over him that this was n't the first time that she had executed this simple manœuver, if manœuver it was. He knew now that he had been imputing to his own attractiveness her invariable drawing near while he transacted his business with the letter-bag. The little pause before Andrews left the room he had set down as a concession to the proprieties. More than ever — so he had read her — if she laid traps for little talks with the private secretary, was it important that the servants should not be set gossiping. But now, with an inward jolt, he asked, had he been making an ass of himself? His hand, already inserted a second time to draw out more letters, came forth empty. He noticed that her eyes were on it as he turned the palm of his hand toward him, fingers doubled and nails in a line. He studied them.

She studied the letters already lying in an unsorted heap. They seemed not to interest. She pressed her handkerchief to her lips and raised her eyes. "I would have told you before — only — only," — her beautiful mouth quivered and her eyes fell again — "you . . . are difficult to talk to."

"Am I?" said Napier, in a tone of polite surprise, still studying his nails.

"For me. Yes . . . You make it difficult. Why *do* you, Mr. Napier?"

That man must have a heart of stone to resist an appeal so voiced. "Perhaps you imagine it," he said, taking refuge in pulling out the rest of the letters and sorting them into piles.

She stood as though too discouraged to continue, too listless to go away. But when, in the midst of his sorting, Napier glanced at her, he discovered no listlessness in the eyes that kept tally of the letters he was dealing out. What earthly good does it do her to read the outsides of our envelopes? he wondered.

"I 've been unhappy," she went on, "most unhappy under my enforced silence. I 've wanted so much that *you* anyhow should know the truth."

"I don't know why I especially — " he began.

"No, no, no!" she said a little wildly, in spite of the hushed softness of her tone, "you don't know. And it 's a good thing — a good thing you don't. But I 'm too unhappy under the innocent little deceit that 's been forced on me. You see, we had quarreled, the Pforzheims and I. That is, *they* quarreled. They each wanted to marry me. Oh, it was dreadful! They wanted to fight a duel . . ."

"About . . .?" Napier laid a long official envelope on the top of Sir William's pile.

"About me," she said with lowered eyes. "That was why I went to America. I could n't bear it. I said: 'We are strangers from this day!' And so," — she pressed her handkerchief again to her lips — "and so we met like that. I told them I would n't stay here an hour if they swerved a hair's breath from the rôle of strangers. Now," —her voice altered suddenly as though out of weariness after immense effort — "now you know."

Napier took out the last letters. "I expect," he said kindly, "it 's been hard enough for you — at times."

"The strain is frightful." She swallowed and began again. "I — Maybe you 've noticed . . . They will write to me from time to time."

She waited. Napier's face as blank as the new sheet of blotting paper in front of the great presentation inkstand.

"Well, is it my fault?" she demanded. "I 've tried to make them see what an equivocal position it puts me in, how unfair —" her face yearned for sympathy.

Napier went on with his sorting.

"It 's too nerve-racking," she said with increasing agitation. "Each one thinks the other has got over that old madness. But the letters they write me . . .! *Frantic!*" She came closer still. She laid her hand on Napier's sleeve. "Do you know, sometimes I 'm afraid . . ." She drew back, as a step sounded on the gravel.

"The Pforzheims!" Napier said to himself.

But a very different apparition stood there. The girl in the Mercury cap. Not so blithe as the day before — eager still, but wistful.

"Why, my *dear* Nan!" Miss von Schwarzenberg said again, precisely as she had before. "I told you I would come for you!"

"Yes, in the afternoon, you said. But I could n't wait. Don't look like that, dearest." She had lowered her voice as Miss von Schwarzenberg joined her in the lobby. "I began to be afraid I 'd only dreamed that you were so near again."

Miss von Schwarzenberg answered in a voice lower still.

Napier gathered up Sir William's letters and his own. As he went with them into the library, Miss von Schwarzenberg turned hastily. "I 'll just go and see if Lady McIntyre can spare me for two minutes. I 'll meet you out there, by the clump of firs."

"All right," the girl said quietly, and turned away.

Miss von Schwarzenberg knew as well as Napier did that Lady McIntyre was in the breakfast-room looking at the illustrated papers over her second cup of coffee. But Miss von Schwarzenberg hurried upstairs.

Ordinarily Napier would have sat reading and answering his own letters till what time Sir William should come in from his ride. To-day he stood by the library fire — still seeing that face under the cap. What had the von Schwarzenberg been saying to her? It was n't at all the face she had brought here the evening before. And if Julian Grant had been struck by the happy faith in its yesterday aspect, Napier found something rather touching in the hurt steadfastness it showed to-day.

"It is n't the same face," Napier repeated to himself; and before he had at all made up his mind what he should do next, he was going through the hall.

There she was pulling off her gloves, and holding her hands over the fire.

"It *is* cold," Napier said, and he seized the poker. The flames sprang up and danced on the girl's face.

"Oh, *my!* How nice! You are the private secretary, are n't you?"

"What makes you think that?" he asked, a little on his dignity.

"Well, the other one was 'Julian,' was n't he?"

Napier did n't much like this familiarity with a Christian name on the part of a stranger. "Yes. I 'm Gavan Napier."

"I 'm glad to meet you, Mr. Napier." She held out her hand.

He said nothing, only glanced round the hall in an undecided fashion after releasing her hand, and then put his letters down on the nearest chair. "I hope I 'm not in your way," the girl said. "You see, I don't know at all what private secretaries do. You are the first one I ever met."

He laughed, and said they were a good deal like other people so far as he 'd observed, and did n't do anything in particular.

Miss Ellis declared she knew better than that. "That 's where you sit, is n't it?" — she nodded at the big table — "writing your state documents. And I suppose everybody goes by on tiptoe. And nobody dares speak to you . . . and *of course* I ought n't to be here!"

"Oh, yes, you ought."

"No. I ought by rights to be out by the firs. But I was cold. I did n't see why I should wait out by the firs when there was a fire here doing nobody any good."

She misinterpreted his steady look. "Oh, my! *you* think I ought to have gone out and waited by the . . .!"

"Nothing of the sort! I should n't have thought half so well of you if you 'd gone out and waited by the firs."

But the wing-capped head with its overweight of hair turned anxiously toward the staircase by which Greta had vanished. "I 've often heard Greta say, 'The great thing is to learn instinctive obedience.'"

"But why on earth should you obey Miss von Schwarzenberg?"

"Because Greta 's the cleverest as well as the most splendid person in the world." She glowed with it. "And knows more in a minute than I do in a year."

Napier laughed at that reason, so Miss Ellis produced another. "And then, you see, ever since I was quite young I always *have* obeyed Greta — when I was good!"— she threw in quickly with a self-convicting laugh.

"How long have you known Miss von Schwarzenberg?"

"Oh, for ages. Ever since I was seventeen."

"That *must* have been a long time ago!"

"Well, it is. It 's going on six years. Will it hold me too?" She looked doubtfully at the brass bar of the fender.

"Oh, yes," he reassured her, "it would hold ten of you." His smiling glance took note of the small-boned hands that clutched the brass. From the delicate ankles and the impossible feet, up to the slim neck, there was n't enough substance in her to furnish forth a good British specimen of half her age. Yet when she stood up she was not only tall, she was almost commanding. That was partly carriage, he decided, and partly — well, what was it?

"The trouble about Greta," she went on, "is that she 's a person everybody is always wanting. Then, added to that, she is the best daughter in the world. Every year she went home for several months. But she always got back in time!" The girl smiled an odd smile, not as though intended for Napier at all. "She always got back (we 've often talked about it) just as I was about to commit some *awful* mistake."

Napier was morally certain he could have got her — if only for the honor and glory of Greta — to enumerate one or two of these timely rescues, if, by a stroke of rank bad luck, Julian had n't appeared at that moment.

"Oh, my!" said Miss Ellis under her breath — which was silly as well as slightly irritating.

With a casual "Hello!" Julian came marching over to the fireplace.

"You 're being very energetic all of a sudden," Napier said, with his smiling malice. "This early worm, Miss Ellis, is Mr. Grant."

"I 'm very glad to meet you." She stood up and held out her hand.

"Has n't it been a splendid morning?" she asked. And did they have many days so un-Scotch-misty as this?

They went on uttering banalities about the morning and the countryside, and smiling into each other's faces.

Napier sat on the fender-stool, chuckling to himself. Fancy old Julian! Do him all the good in the world to have a girl looking at him like that.

She did so want to see as much as ever she could of "this lovely coast." Perhaps Mr. Grant would advise her what to begin with?

Oh, Julian could advise. There was nothing he was readier at.

"Stop! stop!" the girl interrupted, "I must n't be made greedier than I am; for I 've only got two or three days."

"Two or three — ! Where are you going?" Julian demanded.

"Greta thinks London."

"*London?*"

"Well, there *is* the National Gallery, and the old city churches," Nan said, with marked absence of enthusiasm. "Oh, I don't doubt really but I shall find it perfectly fascinating . . . And then from time to time Greta will run up for a day or two."

"It is n't my business," Julian said, in that tone people use when they have definitely adopted the business in question, "but it sounds to me the very poorest — " He left it hanging there.

"Surely," Napier observed quietly, "when you came, you meant to stay longer?"

"Oh — yes! when I first came. But, you see, I did n't understand. I thought being a governess here was like being a governess at home." And quickly, as though to obliterate any suggestion of odious comparison, "Perhaps it 's because we have so few governesses in California."

"Well, does that make it different for them?"

"Well, we give them time to themselves. I — I don't criticize your way," she threw in, a little flustered to find where she was going — "only we — Oh, here is Lady McIntyre!" she ended with much relief.

The manners of the lady of Kirklamont were in marked contrast to her pinched and chilled appearance. Her fairness was the kind that goes with a slightly reddened nose and a faint, bluish tinge about the mouth at this hour of the morning. She was most genial to Miss Ellis, and the girl was, in her turn, won to ease and confidence.

"No, thank you, I won't sit down. I did n't *mean* to stay but half a minute . . . though I 'm afraid Greta may

think, even now, that I still don't understand that her time belongs to you."

"But we are not such slave drivers!" The little lady shook her diamond earrings. Greta could certainly take any day off to be with her friend, and *every* day, she of course had several hours at her disposal, whenever she wished.

Miss von Schwarzenberg, in the act of descending the stairs, had paused the fraction of a second. "Oh, there you are!" she threw over the banisters toward Lady McIntyre.

It occurred to Napier that the girl standing between him and Julian was a little uneasy at being found so far this side of the firs.

"Yes," Lady McIntyre said, "I was just arranging with Miss Ellis that she must stay to luncheon."

"And *I* was just going to ask if you 'd consent to *our* plan," Greta said as she joined the group. "We thought of lunching at the inn."

At sight of the smile on Miss von Schwarzenberg's face — still more at her "plan," — the slight cloud of dubiety vanished from Miss Ellis. She stood in full sunshine.

"But why not lunch here?" urged Lady McIntyre.

"We want to talk America, don't we? And the old days?"

"Yes, yes," said her enraptured friend.

"Well, then," — Lady McIntyre fell in with what she took to be the previous arrangement — "you 'll bring her back to tea."

They all saw Miss Ellis to the door, and Miss Greta saw her to the first gate.

"I say," remarked Julian, when the lady of the house had also disappeared, "why should n't we take those two girls around?"

"Sir William. He 'd never stand it."

"No, no! But after. He plays before tea, does n't he?"

"Yes, before."

"Very well, then. We 'll take 'em round after. I 'll come with the motor." He caught up his cap. "You arrange it with the Paragon." Julian bolted off toward the footpath leading to the inn.

Did she realize that, the woman coming back with the reflective air? Apparently not. She lifted her bent head, and when she saw Napier was waiting there at the door alone she smiled. She was certainly very charming when she smiled.

"I don't want to disparage the golfing powers of either Bobby or Madge," Napier said, "but what do you say to a round with me after tea?"

She looked at him oddly. It struck Napier that she did n't apply her formula, "You are very kind." He was conscious of a slight embarrassment under her scrutiny.

"You say that because Lady McIntyre asked you to."

"Not only for that reason."

Whereat Miss Greta lowered her eyes. "What should I do about Nan Ellis?" she said.

"Oh, we 've thought of that. Mr. Grant will look after her while you and I —" he smiled. "Shall we say half-past five?"

The china-blue eyes turned to the open door and to the

gaitered rotundity approaching — Sir William coming up from the stable. "Half-past five, then," she murmured. On her way to the schoolroom she caught up a book with the air of one who finds at last a boon long sought.

Sir William was inclined to be facetious over "catching you and the Incomparable One. I 've always known the day would come . . ."

Instead of tackling the letters, he went on with his absurd chaffing.

"The fact is," Napier said, when he had shut the library door, "I 've been wanting to say a word about this lady."

"What 's up?" Sir William was still smiling roguishly.

"I 'm thinking of the matter of the translation. Surely an official document of that description ought not to be in chance hands."

What did he mean? It had n't been in chance hands.

It had been in the hands of Miss von Schwarzenberg. And Miss von Schwarzenberg, Napier reminded his chief, was an outsider. Or, if not that (hastily he readjusted himself to the McIntyre view) she was at all events outside the official circle.

"My dear boy, of course she is. She is a woman. And beyond knowing an English equivalent for a German word, she understands as much about the bearing of a paper on International Commerce — as much as that Aberdeen terrier."

"I think, sir, you underrate Miss von Schwarzenberg's intelligence."

"Or maybe you," said Sir William, wrinkling his little

nose with silent laughter, "maybe you underrate the Aberdeen's."

. . . . . .

Miss Greta did not produce her friend at tea time. "Nan does n't care about tea. Americans don't, you know. She will meet us at the links."

And it so fell out.

If Miss Ellis did n't "take to" tea, she "took to" golf "as if she 'd been a born Scot," according to Julian. Why on earth Miss von Schwarzenberg should want to go on trying when the power to hit a ball was so obviously not among her many gifts, passed Napier's understanding. It struck him as rather nice of her that she was n't the least disturbed by Nan's swinging efficiency. Was that because it got rid of her? — put wide stretches of sand and gorse between the ill-matched couples? Napier would hardly have stood it so amiably but for Julian's disarming frankness as to the satisfaction he, at all events, was deriving from the arrangement.

And Nan — planted high above a bunker, hair rather wild, face sparkling with zest for the game, or for the company, or for that she was Nan Ellis.

"*Look* at her!" Julian said, on a note so new in Napier's experience of him that he stood silent a moment, looking, not at the girl, but at his friend.

Napier was still in the phase of being immensely diverted at the spiffing progress of old Julian's flirtation — so much better for him than addling his brains over that scheme of internationalism that was going to save the world.

"Look at her," Julian repeated, "did you ever see anybody so, so . . . God 's-in-His-Heaven,-all 's-well-with-the-world!"

"Look here, Julian, I hope you 're not . . ."

"Well, do you know, I 'm afraid I am," said his friend. "I don't really quite understand what it is that 's happened. But *something* has."

With that childlike directness that was part of Julian's charm for the more complex mind, he turned to Napier just before the von Schwarzenberg came within earshot. "There 's a fly in the precious ointment," he said. "This rot about her going to London. Look here, Napier, the von Schwarzenberg woman would do anything for you. Make her leave the girl in peace here."

"Impossible!" Napier said with decision. "How *could* I ask such a thing, you unpractical being!"

"That woman" was too near now for more, and Julian sheered off toward the figure on the sky-line.

On the way back to the hall, Miss von Schwarzenberg talked more intimately than ever she had to Napier. She told him about her home in Hanover. About her childhood. Her "years of exile." So she spoke of America. She had a story of how an odious Chicago millionaire had wanted to marry her.

"But why do I tell you all this?"

Napier too had been wondering.

"It must be," she went on, "because you are a little less 'remote' this evening, and I am suffering from *Heimweh.*"

In a sturdy, practical tone Napier advised her not to give way to that! In order to divert her thoughts, "What

do you think of . . ."— he nodded to the two on in front.

"Of what?" said Miss von Schwarzenberg, dreamily.

"Well, are n't you chaperoning your friend?"

"Chaperoning!" She came to, suddenly. Plainly she had n't liked the word. "We are too near of an age for chaperoning."

"It 's not a question of age, is it?" — Napier extricated himself quickly. "But perhaps it 's only that I don't understand. I never can be quite sure about Americans."

"Exactly my feeling," Miss von Schwarzenberg struck in. "They are so old . . . and yet so passionate. Oh, there 's more than three thousand miles of salt water between us of the Old World and the people of the New. They 're a new kind of humanity."

They found Nan and Julian alone in the hall. As Napier stopped to unshoulder the golf bag, Miss von Schwarzenberg lingered too.

"What shall you do in that miserable inn all by yourself the whole evening?" they heard Julian saying.

At the sound of the golf clubs clattering into the corner, Nan called out, "Here they are!" She came running to the lobby. "I wanted to say good-by, dearest." She pressed Greta's hand. "Has n't it been heavenly, learning golf? I' never enjoyed myself so much."

"I wonder," Miss von Schwarzenberg said, smiling, "how many thousand times I 've heard you say exactly that."

"Oh, have you, Greta? No matter how many times I 've said it before, I never knew what the words meant till this minute. Good-by."

Julian walked on air at the girl's side. "I say," Napier called after him, "don't forget you 're dining here."

"Here? Oh, no," said the unblushing Julian. "I 'm dining at 'The Queen of Scots.'"

"*Are* you?" said Nan, stopping short. "I was *thinking* of asking you, but I did n't know I had."

"You had n't."

"Oh! and do you in Scotland," she laughed, "invite yourself to dinner?"

"Yes, when it 's an inn."

They went off arguing, laughing.

The hall seemed to grow suddenly dark. Miss von Schwarzenberg leaned against the big table as she unwound her scarf.

"Is your friend given to these sudden — a — these flirtations?" Napier asked in his lightest tone.

Miss von Schwarzenberg spoke of "several little affairs." She could n't say how far they had gone. "You know the American standard in these things is n't ours." She spoke of the sanctity, the binding character, of the German betrothal.

While this recital was going on, Napier's thoughts were nearer the Scots' Inn than the scene of the German *Polterabend.*

Should he or should n't he?

He knew quite well he could prevent this American girl's being shunted on to the London line. Suppose he did n't prevent it? Julian would never know how easily Napier could have kept Nan Ellis in Scotland.

Should he or should n't he?

Suddenly it occurred to him how extraordinarily serious he was being about this trifle. What could it matter whether this little American tourist spent a few weeks in Scotland or went to London to-morrow? Napier knew, looking back, that he had no faintest prevision of the difference that the girl's going or her staying would make, even to Julian. And all the same he stood there in the middle of Kirklamont Hall with the oddest sense of compulsion upon him.

He must see to it that the girl did n't go.

"I 'm far from being unsympathetic to," — he moved his head in the general direction of the "Queen of Scots." "But, speaking of flirtation, I can't help hoping your friend won't carry *my* friend off to London."

Miss von Schwarzenberg's air of dreamy sentimentality dropped from her as the petals of an overblown rose at some rude touch. She stood bare of all but the essential woman with never a grace to clothe her. "What on *earth* are you talking about? Does she *mean* to carry him off . . .?"

Napier shrugged. "I can only say that it 's highly probable if Miss Ellis goes to London that Mr. Grant will find an excuse for going too."

"You 'd have to prevent that. What would his father, what would Lady Grant think of . . ." She stopped there, as having indicated some unsuitableness even greater than might appear.

"All the more, then," said Napier, as though she had given out of those close-shut lips some damning fact, "all the more we ought to keep an eye on them. But if they

are in London — there 'll be only one of us 'to keep an eye'—" She kept both of hers on Napier. "You 'd be here," he added, "and I 'd be sweltering in London."

"You, too, in Nan's train!"

"Oh, dear, no!" he laughed. "In Julian's, catching up what Miss Ellis designs to let fall."

"You, too!" she repeated, as though the calamity were greater than she could grasp.

He nodded. "I 'd have to. Especially after what you . . . did n't say. And to go to London now would be an awful sell for both of us."

"For both of us?" she inquired with a little catch.

"For Julian and me. My holiday begins in ten days, and we were counting on having it in Scotland. You see," he explained, "we 've looked forward to these next weeks for over a year. We 've spent our summers together ever since Eton days. If Julian goes, I 've got to go too. And I should look on such a necessity," — he gazed upon the lady as he spoke, with eyes well practised in conveying tender regretfulness — "I should look on it as a personal misfortune."

The stricture about her mouth relaxed. The lips even trembled a little.

Napier could n't imagine himself actually making love to Miss von Schwarzenberg. But he could easily imagine himself kissing that beautiful mouth of hers. So easily, indeed, that with some abruptness he turned away.

It was lucky he had.

"There she is!" Out of a fiery cloud, Madge McIntyre, on tiptoe, looked in at the window. Her schoolboy brother, behind her, was grinning. "Bobby 's won

his bet!" she called out derisively to the world in general. The wind of her scorn stirred in her flaming hair. Wildfire tossed it back to say to her companion, "She has been able to tear herself away from her American!"

"I 've been looking for you," said Miss Greta, calmly. "Come round."

"Looking for me! Oh, *my!*" A final shake of the flaming mane, and as if Wildfire's fury had shriveled her; had burnt both of them up, she and Bobby vanished.

Napier made for the library, thanking his stars for the interruption. What in the name of common sense had he been about to do? To saddle himself with a flirtation — or a relation of some sort — with this foreign young woman from whom, with considerable expenditure of skill, he had kept clear for over a year!

"Mr. Napier," — she overtook him on the library threshold — "I can't have you thinking me ungrateful. I appreciate — *do* believe me, how particularly kind and thoughtful — yes, chivalrous, you 've shown yourself — "

With genuine amazement Napier faced her again. "What — a — I don't understand . . ."

"Oh, I can well believe you do these things — these generous, delicate things almost without thinking." Before he knew what she was about, she had found his hand. She was pressing it in both of hers. She held up her face — or, as it seemed, her lips. He backed away. "I shall *never* forget," she said in her intense whisper, "your putting me on my guard like this. And I may be able to be of use to you before we 've done. Meggie, where are you, child?"

CHAPTER IV

THE thing happened with a remarkable regularity. An expedition would be proposed by Julian, vetoed by Greta. Julian would stir Nan's enthusiasm. Greta would dampen it. Yet Napier soon realized that, if Nan were determined to come, Miss Greta was equally determined to come, and have an eye on her.

So it fell out that the von Schwarzenberg's schemes, first to banish and later to sequestrate the American, were set at naught through the agency of Mr. Julian Grant. With a perfectly careless transparency he showed that no plan of a social nature stood the smallest chance of enlisting him unless it included the American. Whatever Miss Greta described in the future, she must have known that at that moment her only chance of seeing more of Napier was to fall in with Julian's program. After all, exceptional as her position at Kirklamont was acknowledged to be, she was far too level-headed an expert to leave her special charge out of any proposed diversion. Since Madge had to be included, Bobby would come too — when he was n't off with the head keeper, or fishing with the Pforzheims. If "those children" were added to the party, Miss Greta would be left the freer to cultivate her cautiously conducted friendliness with the secretary. For the rest, Miss Greta bothered herself extraordinarily little about the friend who had come so far for her sake.

Lady McIntyre and Sir William were everything that was kind and hospitable. No later than the third morning after the arrival of Miss Ellis, Lady McIntyre made Sir William stop the motor at the inn and invite the young lady to dine with them that evening.

Poor Julian! It 's all up with him, Napier decided, between sympathy and malicious satisfaction, as the girl slipped her long satin cloak off her shoulders in the hall.

Sir William eyed the apparition with the appraising glance of the connoisseur in feminine good looks. Plainly she passed muster.

"Well, Miss Ellis, and shall I ask you, as your compatriots do me when I 've been only a few hours in the place, 'What do you think of this country?'"

"If you did, I could tell you a-plenty right now. And a great deal more to-morrow!"

"Why to-morrow?"

"Because —" She interrupted herself to go forward upon the flustered entrance of the hostess. Lady McIntyre's manner was that of the person so inured to being late that she got no good out of being on time. But to this manifestation Napier had long been accustomed. What mildly intrigued him was the manner of the girl. She had put on a different grace along with her evening gown. Her slower movements had even a touch of stateliness, as though to match the trailing elegance of embroidered chiffons.

"Come now, Miss Ellis," Sir William repeated, "why could you tell me more about your impressions after to-morrow?"

"Because Mr. Grant is going to show us a castle. And Greta has promised to take pictures of it. I suppose you know how splendid Greta is at taking pictures? You don't? Well, she 's every bit as good as a professional."

"What castle?" Lady McIntyre asked. "Glenfallon?"

Miss von Schwarzenberg had come into the hall, with Madge clinging on her arm.

"We have some delightful foreigners at Glenfallon. Germans. We owe them a great debt of gratitude —" Every one there, except Miss Ellis, knew that Lady McIntyre was going on to tell, as she invariably did to each newcomer, the story of Frau Lenz and the providential result of taking her advice. No one knew better than Madge how this repetition bored and annoyed Miss Greta. When her mother had got as far as "debt of gratitude," Madge threw in the information that "the old man wore goggles! And goes scudding about the firth in the dead of night in a motor launch. Simply bogey, I call it!"

"It is bogey enough," said Miss Greta, gently, "to be nearly blind and not able to sleep."

Julian's entry did not disturb the group at the fire.

"If they 're so kind, those Pforzheims, I wish," Miss Ellis went on, "they 'd take us out in their launch some time."

"Take us out? Not they!" said Madge.

"They won't? How do you know, miss?" Sir William pulled Madge's ear.

"They won't take people out in their boat. Won't even take me. Asked 'em."

"Meggie!" Lady McIntyre's tone was shocked, but

the look she cast round said, "There 's a spirited young person for you!"

Bobby came in, and Julian joined the others in time to celebrate the superior attractions of a sailboat over a beastly launch. "I 'll take you out and you 'll see!" The person who was apparently to do the seeing was Miss Ellis.

Greta von Schwarzenberg caught Napier's eye. "These innocents!" she seemed to say. It was the sort of cautious interchange that punctuated the entire evening. It went on across the flowers during dinner. It went on across the bridge table after dinner. The silent interchange advanced immeasurably the sense of understanding between Miss Greta and Sir William's secretary. Perhaps he owed himself this relaxation. Though why Napier felt something owing, was n't yet clear to him. What was clear was the surprise, not unmixed with ironic amusement, of the man accustomed to be first at the goal of feminine interest, who sees a person commonly quite out of the running pass him with easy stride.

Napier found in the unusual experience of looking on at this kind of scene, instead of playing the chief part in it, something that appealed both to his sense of the ludicrous and, since the person concerned was Julian, to his generosity. So good for Julian!

At dinner Napier had almost pointedly ignored Miss Ellis. She must talk to Julian. But by no canon of friendship could Napier be asked not to have a little fun out of the spectacle. It ministered too temptingly (especially with Miss Greta opposite) to that sense of the ludicrous which other people's emotional adventures are apt to inspire in us. And the more acutely and exquisitely

is this pleasure provided if either of the "parties" has hitherto neglected or been deprived of this element in human experience. Not to know the ropes is to provide amusement to the old salt. Napier, in the character of the Old Salt upon the seas of sentiment, sat and smiled.

It was only when the party broke up that he stood a minute beside the girl, while Julian discussed his sailing plans with the others.

"Why do you look at Miss Greta like that?" Napier demanded in an undertone.

She laughed a little consciously. "Am I looking at her like that?"

"Yes. As if you did n't know whether Julian's plan was a good plan till she 'd endorsed it."

"It 's quite true," she answered in a rush of confidence. "I don't always follow her advice, but I always wish I had. Heavens! the things Greta has saved me from!"

"And what were some of your greatest escapes?"

"Oh, the usual things. Thinking I 'd better marry this one, and then that."

"But why did you think you 'd better marry them?"

"Because I thought they 'd be so awfully hurt if I did n't." She joined in his laughter, and then seriously: "You must understand they were *quite* nice too. I rather loved them, as you say over here."

"And would you always be ready to give up the idea of marrying anybody Greta disapproved?"

"I — don't — know," she said.

. . . . . .

"Are you really going to motor her to Abergarry?" Napier demanded, after Miss Ellis' departure.

"Oh, you heard that!" Julian laughed. "We thought it was a secret."

"A secret? 'Oh, my, I'd love to see your home!'" he mimicked. "'And is it really three hundred years old? Oh, my!'"

"Look here, Gavan," Julian stopped short in the middle of the moonlit road — "don't say you are n't going to like her."

"I don't see my way not to liking her," he said grudgingly, "but I felt to-night, if she said, 'Oh, my,' again, I should probably wring her neck."

"What 's wrong with it? Bless my soul! It 's harmless enough. Some of our up-to-date young women *swear*."

"Oh, if *you* don't mind, I suppose I must put up with it. But, I say, you are n't going to take her alone to Abergarry, are you?"

"Why not?" Julian was smiling. "Do *you* want to come?"

"I was only thinking," Napier said, "it was rather marked, your not including the von Schwarzenberg."

"Why should we always have to lug that German woman along?" The question came out with uncommon rancor.

"Nan," Julian went on, already with the proprietary air, "is under the most complete illusion about the von Schwarzenberg." Something watchful came into the face he showed to the moonlight — almost suspicious, totally un-Julianesque. "*I* thought the reason Nan was going away so meekly to London was that she was dependent on von Schwarzenberg."

Napier said that he, too, had received the impression that Miss Greta was financing her "little friend."

Madge certainly thought so. But Madge has a way of getting to the bottom of things.

She had done it when she came over to say good night to Julian and Nan.

"Miss Greta was very kind to you at school, was n't she?"

"Very, very kind."

"And she gives you your holidays? Pays your expenses?"

Miss Ellis stared. "Expenses!" — and then broke into a little laugh. "Why, no. You are a funny girl."

Madge threw back her hair. She did n't relish being called a funny girl. She ached to bring this interloper down off her high horse. "Was it a very expensive school Miss von Schwarzenberg sent you to?"

"Sent me — to school? Oh, you have n't understood her. I had my mother to send me. And she sent Greta, too. Mother used to say," — Miss Ellis was still talking more to Mr. Grant than to the girl — "she considered it a very great privilege to put opportunities in the way of a person like Greta."

. . . . . .

Ever since the days of "wet bob" prowess, Julian was at his best, Napier had always thought, on the water. But sailing was the sport he gave his soul to. He forgot his troublesome theories, his quarrel with the world's ordering, and yielded himself with delight to a comradely tussle with the difficulties of navigation, on a rock-bound, "chancy" bit of coast, as he called it.

He looked his best too. The lithe activity of body, the extraordinary quickness of eye, showed the dreaming gone; instead of it, a mastery in alertness. His girlish brown hands, endowed with a steadiness as of steel.

The person who was distinctly not at her best under these conditions was Miss Greta. She had opposed the boating plan as long as she could. The moment she grasped the fact that Nan and Julian, and probably Napier, were going on the water with or without Miss Greta, Miss Greta saw her course with characteristic clarity. She adored sailing! It was only her "sense of responsibility" which had made her hesitate.

Her sense of responsibility, if it was that, went far to spoil her pleasure. She had a curious idea that, though the coast hereabouts was dangerous, the farther out you went the more you tempted fortune. "Those horr*chi*ble, rock-bound islands!"

Napier smiled to himself. He did a good deal of covert smiling during those perfect July days, though he did n't pretend to himself that he was specially happy.

The initial reason he gave himself for his state of mind was the breath-taking speed of your inexperienced person, once he is started. While Napier had been giving a secretly humorous welcome to Julian's little distraction, here was that rash youth planning to motor the girl to Abergarry. The only thing, so far as Napier could judge, that prevented Julian from introducing the girl forthwith as his future wife was the trifling circumstance that Sir James and Lady Grant had just telegraphed to say they would be detained a fortnight longer at Bad Nauheim.

There were times when, if Napier had been forced to

thusiastically — Bobby even violently — in favor of going out to the Islands. The project was opposed by the one person with a pertinacity that Julian was sure could mean only one thing. A jealous woman's determination to preserve her ascendancy. To make a test case. She 's afraid she 's losing hold. She must make a stand somewhere. She makes it at Gull Island. We are n't to land there if von Schwarzenberg dies for it. I tell you what it is, Gavan. I 'll get Nan out to Gull Island to-morrow, or I 'll know the reason why!" The face Julian turned to his friend in the starlight was lit with radiances Napier had never thought to see there.

"This way." Julian began to tread his way on in front, among the rocks and underbrush. "I shall go and wait in the gorse by the inn till von Schwarzenberg takes herself off."

A sense of utter joylessness fell on Napier, as for a few minutes longer he kept the pace at Julian's heels. He struggled consciously against the absurd illusion of being left out in the cold. He, with his hosts of friends, his hosts of "affairs," scattered broadcast through the last ten years, the Gavan Napier of enviable wordly lot, had an instant's keen perception of the externality of all these things. He had never lived through an hour like this that was Julian's.

"I 'll turn back now," Napier said aloud. The figure in front neither turned nor tarried. On and on.

Napier smiled. His friend was hurrying along under the stars toward a planet mightier for light and leading than any in the heavens — a candle set in the window of a girl.

Before Napier had finished sorting the next morning's letters, the Grants' chauffeur drove up to Kirklamont with a note.

Must **see you before the others come. Car will wait and bring you to the landing.** **J. G.**

The slight figure was prancing up and down the strip of sand between encircling rocks. Never a look toward his beloved boat, riding with transfigured sails at the entrance to the cove. As far away as Napier could see his friend, he felt the nervous force that was being expended in that absorbed prowl.

"I nearly routed you out in the middle of the night," was the way Julian began.

"You remember last night, just to prevent me from taking Nan home, that woman took Nan home herself? Well, she stayed at the 'Queen' a mortal hour. As if that was n't enough in all conscience, Nan was for seeing her home! 'No, darling, no!' I heard the von Schwarzenberg say. And then with that acrid break in her sugariness, 'I don't want to be taken half-way!'

"There was something I lost. Then, 'My dear child,' I heard her say, 'you must allow me here to know what is appropriate, what is expected. What is n't expected, is that an inexperienced girl, strange to the place, should be running about dark roads this time of night. You would be misunderstood. I should be misunderstood if I let you.' Then Nan was, '*So* sorry!' and 'Forgive me, Greta!' They kissed. Nan went slowly back to the inn. Then, instead of turning into the Kirklamont footpath, Schwarzenberg came up the hill. I laughed to myself to

think of her surprise when she should come across me. But she turned to the left and cut across the west flank. I thought maybe the woman had got bewildered, going in unaccustomed places at night. But she was n't walking like a bewildered person at all. Do you know what she *was* walking like? Like a person who has done the same thing before. She was making straight as a die for that old shepherd's hut the bracken cutters use. She went into that hut and stayed there three quarters of an hour."

"*No!*"

"And when she came out, Ernst Pforzheim was with her. They came along so near me that I began to be sorry for them. They were heading straight for a nasty jar when they should see me. Well, they did n't see me. They went by not five yards away from the stone pile I was leaning against — talking hard in German, till I lost sound and sight of them."

"God bless me!"

"I 'm sorry, Gavan." To Napier's amazement, Julian was looking at him with pitying eyes. Evidently, he thought, in spite of his friend's air of humorous detachment, he had been cherishing some genuine feeling for Miss Greta.

The idea, especially in view of the revelation, offended Napier's *amour propre*. "I had n't thought it necessary to tell anybody," he said, "but I knew there was — or there had been — a Pforzheim friendship under the rose."

"You did n't think it necessary to tell . . ."

"I was in the Schwarzenberg's confidence before . . . all this. I could n't give her away, could I?"

"You need n't have given her away. The merest hint

would have warned me. You might have thought of Nan!" he burst out passionately.

"Oh, everybody can't be thinking of Nan, to the exclusion of everybody else."

The other man looked into Napier's eyes. And Napier laughed out. It was so patent that old Julian, newly enlightened as to the part love plays, had conceived the idea that his poor friend was the victim of a tenderness for Miss Greta.

Gavan caught in the toils of a woman like that! — the tragedy of it softened Julian. His face cleared. The motor was coming back with the others.

But the only others who were in the car were Madge, distinctly scowling, and Bobby, cheerful as usual. "Miss Greta's got a headache. Not coming!" the boy called out.

Julian was in the car as soon as they were out. "I'll go and get Miss Ellis."

"You can't. She won't leave 'her friend'!" said Madge, jerking her head away.

They did n't sail that day.

. . . . . .

Julian haunted Kirklamont all the afternoon and evening. No sign of either lady.

"I should n't have thought she would be so obvious!" Julian burst out, as he and Napier sat smoking at the far end of the terrace. "To stick in bed all day just so as to prevent Nan —"

"What's the good? There's always to-morrow."

"She thinks twenty-four hours will block the business pretty completely, and maybe even take the edge off Nan's

keenness about the island for good. Anyway," — his forehead drew up into lines of anxiety — "twenty-four hours will give her time to draw the reins tighter. She 's drawing the reins tighter this minute." Julian looked up at the pile of Kirklamont, somewhere in whose innermost Nan Ellis was in attendance on a so-called sick-bed instead of being, where she ought to be, out sailing with Julian. "I 'll tell you what it is, Gavan," — he drove a fist into the palm of his hand. "You may take my word for it I 'll get Nan Ellis out to Gull Island to-morrow somehow. You see if I don't."

"You said that last night."

"No. I said last night I 'd get her out there or I 'd know the reason why. Well, now I know the reason against it." He nodded toward the two windows whose blinds were drawn.

"The reason does n't seem to mind so much your wandering about the mainland with her 'little friend,'" Napier reflected out loud. "She seems to have a special scunner against islands. Why?"

"Especially against Gull Island," Julian agreed. And he too echoed, "Why?"

. . . . . .

To the general surprise, Nan Ellis had risen early and vanished. Miss Greta had fallen asleep and, opening her eyes at eight — no Nan. The disappearance exercised a strikingly curative effect upon Miss Greta. She rose and dressed, and herself conducted a search. "*I* know!" she said at last. "Nan has gone to get fresh clothes. She has a mania for never wearing twice what she calls a 'shirt waist.'"

Sir William had already left the breakfast table, and every one but Napier had finished. Still Miss Greta lingered. "She *must* come soon — after leaving me like that."

And come she did; across the lawn, in full view of the dining-room windows, walking at Julian Grant's side, looking up into his face; Julian, talking with great earnestness, his right hand, palm upward, now raised, now lowered, with that weighing action Napier knew so well. They parted when they reached the path, and Nan came on alone, "Julian," she announced with no apparent self-consciousness in use of his name — "Julian 's coming back to take me for a sail, whether anybody else wants to go or not."

"Oh, really!" Miss Greta exchanged a look with Napier.

"Thank you!" said Madge at her prickly pertest. "Since you are so pressing — "

"We must wait for the letters!" It was so that Miss Greta, coming out into the hall, announced her intention of being one of the party. So, too, she betrayed her cherished hope that Napier might join them.

"Of course Gavan must go." He, Sir William, was n't going to be a spoil-sport! And he announced the fact with a roguish significance that made Miss Greta cast down her eyes. When she lifted them, there was the bag. It proved a light post. Sir William tore open two or three envelopes while he stood there.

"Anything in the papers?" Miss Greta asked Napier.

A glance at the outsides of her own letters seemed to

satisfy her. Did she read other people's with the same facility?

"The papers don't seem to have come," Napier answered.

"Not come! I wonder why!" She listened while he explained, in the easy British fashion, "that now and then the fella at the Junction would forget to throw the papers out."

"And you stand that? Sir William does n't get the man dismissed?"

"What the devil . . .!" Sir William broke out. Apparently there were things which Sir William could not stand! One of them was in the letter he held as he went fuming toward the library, with Napier at his heels.

"Shut the door! Look here. The fact of that confidential memorandum being in the hands of the British Government is known. Known in the Hamburg shipping center, of all things! Here, you see what they say." Sir William thrust under the eyes of his secretary the highly disconcerting letter he had just received from the Board of Trade. "Well — ? It certainly did n't happen in *my* department. Damned impudence!" Sir William burst out, "to suppose that any of *our* people . . ." He glared at an invisible cross-examiner, "It 's never been out of our hands!"

"Except," Napier threw in, "to come into the translator's."

"Translator!" his chief echoed pettishly. Sir William, like many men not at home in foreign languages, quite particularly objected to being reminded of the fact.

"Translator! They are n't worrying about the translator. It 's what you 're here for."

"I was n't the translator of that particular document. You gave it to Miss von Schwarzenberg to do."

"To be sure! But remembering that does n't help us."

"I wonder!" said Gavan Napier.

"Come, come!" said Sir William. "It 's annoying to have secret information go astray, but it need n't warp our common sense."

Napier's duty, as he saw it, to try to turn his chief's mind toward a possible culprit under his own roof was discounted at the start, as the younger man well knew, by Sir William's chivalrous view of women. That was n't really what was the matter with his view, but that was the name it went by. Sir William had married his butterfly lady for her painted wings. Finding but little underneath the blue and golden dust, he loyally concluded that the only difference between Lady McIntyre and other men's wives was a difference in the hue and the degree of their gold and blue — or their leaden and dun, as the case might be.

Even if women were told things, they could never distinguish what was important from what was trivial, and they forgot as quickly the precise point as the general bearing. Sir William had lived many happy years in the comfort of these convictions.

"I tell you, Gavan, the use of that document would argue a relationship with affairs quite grotesque to suppose on the part of any woman."

The thought of the Pforzheims flashed across Napier, bringing a kind of relief. Miss Greta might quite in-

nocently have remembered and retailed enough to Mr. Ernst for him to turn to account.

For the first hour and a half of that memorable sail, the *Kelpie* ran lightly before a delicate breeze. An eager girl at the prow, a watchful woman at the stern, youth and manhood on board — a cargo of fair hopes borne along under skies of summer to airs of extreme sweetness. It was the very light opera of seafaring and of life. No faintest hint of the weightier merchandise — for which mankind takes risks.

Julian looked back at the receding coastline. "How gloriously Glenfallon stands!" He quoted, "'A great sea mark outstanding every flaw!'"

Innocent as it was, the comment seemed not to please Miss Greta. She thought the castle was "probably not so great a 'sea mark' as it looks to us."

Julian assured her that you could see Glenfallon tower, "Well, a long way beyond those cruisers."

"What cruisers?" All eyes except Miss Greta's swept the horizon. And all found it featureless, till Bobby picked out a couple of dun-gray shapes.

Nan looked at Julian with frank admiration. "My! what wonderful eyes you must have! I can't see a thing!"

"Pooh! Mr. Grant is n't a patch on Ernst Pforzheim," said Bobby.

"Oh, you and your Pforzheims!" Julian scoffed.

With his Scotch tenacity, Bobby stuck to his guns. "All I 'm saying is, Mr. Ernst can do better than see a ship when it 's so far away nobody else knows there 's a ship there at all. *He* can tell you what she is!"

"Any one with good sight," said Miss Greta, "can be

trained. In German schools, she went on, a study of silhouettes was just part of the ordinary discipline of the eye.

Julian was deflecting Madge's course to the left of Gull Island.

"Oh, *do* let us go a *little* nearer!" the girl implored.

"No!" came from Miss Greta's cushions in the stern; "the . . . the channel is n't safe!"

Julian began to tell about bird-nesting over there when he was a boy. And a cave the smugglers had used —

"Oh, my!" came the familiar note. "We simply *must* go and explore!"

"No," said Miss Greta decisively. "*No!*"

Napier caught Julian's eye. "Why?" they both asked silently.

And now even the devoted Nan was ready with, "Dearest Greta, why not?"

"Because it — it 's too dangerous, I tell you!" She had carried a handkerchief to her lips. Over the handkerchief the eyes looked out to the Gull rocks, with an expression not easy to define. But Napier felt as clearly as ever he 'd felt anything in his life: she will do something to prevent those two from wandering away together on Gull Island. What would she do? What *could* she do? He lay in the boat and speculated.

Certainly Miss Greta's conception of her responsibility for the safety of her charges had produced a curious agitation in that lady. While the others were arguing, she dashed her handkerchief down from her lips, that were seen to be trembling, and called out roughly, "*Madge!* I forbid it!"

"Why . . . Miss Greta?" said the astonished girl, staring at her altered idol with wide eyes.

"You must turn back," said the lady, her bosom heaving.

Whether Julian did n't hear, or would n't hear, Napier did n't know. Nan Ellis had turned to look at the island. She leaned far out over the bow. Motionless as a figure-head, she faced the islands and the outer sea. The wind drowned Greta's protest — it blew the girl's loose hair straight back — it made a booming in the sail.

"Mr. Grant, I *refuse* to let them land!"

Julian stared at her. Miss Greta made an effort to speak in a more normal tone. "It 's too — *too* dangerous," she said hoarsely.

"Oh, very well," Julian said. "They can stay in the boat."

"Then why," — her voice rose again — "why are you going so near? You just want to tantalize them!"

"They won't be half so tantalized, will you, Madge, if somebody goes and brings back the news. I have n't been there for a dozen years — nor anybody else, I should say."

The boat was cutting through the bright water at a great speed. The wind sang in the sail.

Miss von Schwarzenberg half rose. "Stop!" she cried out. "I — I 'm dizzy — I 'm sick!" She lurched; she flung out her hands. Before anybody had time to catch her, or, indeed, had any conception of the need to, Miss von Schwarzenberg had lost her balance. She was over the side of the boat.

Napier sprang to his feet just a second too late. Greta, in five fathoms of water, was crying for help.

The first Nan knew of what had happened, Madge was screaming with horror and Julian was tearing off his coat. But Napier was nearer. Miss Greta need n't have lifted her arms out of the water as the foolish do, calling frantically, "Mr. Napier! Mr. Nap —!" before, most horribly, she disappeared. Napier was out of the boat and swimming toward a hat. He dived and came up, supporting a dripping yellow head on one arm.

Julian helped to lift Miss Greta in. They covered her with coats. The two girls chafed her hands. Julian, silent with remorse, as fast as he could was bringing the *Water Kelpie* home.

As Napier supported Miss Greta down the little gangway, she pressed his arm. Under her breath, "You 've saved my life," she murmured. "For all that 's left of it, I shall remember."

She would n't wait till they could get a motor. In her clinging, soaking clothes she insisted on walking those three quarters of a mile from the landing to Kirklamont.

Oh, Greta von Schwarzenberg was game, for all her pardonable panic at the sudden prospect of death. Napier admitted as much to Miss Ellis, as the heroine of the day hurried on before them, nobly concerned to tone down the story with which Madge and Bobby were so pleasantly occupied in freezing their mother's blood.

Nan lingered a moment at Julian's side in the lobby, but it was to Napier she was talking. "'Peril of death'?" she repeated, under cover of the repercussions of Lady McIntyre's consternation and thankfulness. "Why do you say that?"

"Well, I don't want to make much of the little I did —

PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY

but suppose I had n't been there, and suppose Julian could n't swim!"

"But Greta can."

Both men stared at the girl incredulously.

"It 's none the less good of you — what you did. And very horrid for poor Greta, with all her nice clothes on —"

"She can *swim?*"

"Like a fish."

CHAPTER V

UPON Miss von Schwarzenberg's reappearance after luncheon, the family welcomed her with affectionate enthusiasm. Lady McIntyre established the rescued one on the sofa. Nan Ellis brought a footstool. Sir William stirred the fire.

Napier was struck by the picture of amenity and cheerfulness presented by the group.

"No, Miss Greta," said Madge, "you need n't be looking round; the papers *have n't* come, I 'm glad to say. You 've got to rest and be taken care of." She spread the shawl over Miss Greta's knees. Sir William, from the hearth-rug, beamed upon the scene.

"Eh? What? Speaking from London?" he said to the servant, who had come in with a message. "All right." So little was Sir William prepared for any important communication, he did n't even go into the library to receive it. He crossed to the telephone on the opposite side of the hall.

Napier would probably have concerned himself about the message no more than Lady McIntyre or Madge, but for the chance that made him aware of how intently Greta was taking in the swift change that came over the amiable, fussy, little figure with the receiver at his ear.

"What? *What?* Say that again. *When?* Six o'clock

self had the air of being even more wrought up, now that he 'd had time to think over his news, than he had been on receiving it. He stood frowning and working his eyebrows as the conversation in the hall died and the company waited for the enlightenment which Madge had foretold was sure to come.

"Madness!" He flung it out to an invisible audience. "Madness!"

"Oh, Ireland!" said Lady McIntyre, certain of the inevitable connection.

"Ireland? Not at all. Austria."

Miss Greta, her envelope in hand, had turned about in her chair and looked over the back of it, her round head slightly on one side in an attitude of polite attention. Very different from the form adopted by the ladies of Sir William's own family, secure as they were in their knowledge that Sir William would unburden himself.

They seemed disposed to look upon the news, when it did come, as something of an anticlimax, for Sir William preceded his launching of the fact with an increased activity of eyebrow and a furious jingling of seals. "Austria," he said, "has sent an ultimatum to Servia."

"Oh, is that all?" Lady McIntyre's last lingering fear was laid to rest.

"Couched in such terms," Sir William went on, "as no self-respecting nation could accept."

Miss Greta's air of elaborate deference suffered no change. She heard that the Austrian Government was plainly composed of a set of Bedlamites, "scratching matches in a powder-magazine."

Sir William seemed to have his excitement, his anxiety,

all to himself, till Mr. Grant came in with Nan Ellis. Even then, Sir William had only one person with whom to share the graver implications in the news.

You 'd say Julian neither heard nor saw the girl he had been frankly adoring as they came in. Question after question he fired at Sir William, rather as though that gentleman were responsible for the *impasse*. "*What!* Servia is to take it or leave it *en bloc* by to-morrow night? Why, that means there 's less than twenty hours between Europe and —" he stopped appalled.

They still called it Servia at this date.

"Europe?" said Miss Greta, gently. "You mean Servia."

The butler came in with the belated papers.

Sir William snatched up the "Times." He glanced quickly at headlines.

"They don't make much of it," Napier said.

"Naturally," Miss Greta excused them. "They are full of their own difficulty."

"What do you call their own difficulty?" Napier asked, as he paused to turn the paper.

"Why, Ireland," she answered promptly.

Napier found himself looking at her.

"There are some sane people even in Ireland," Sir William threw out over the top of his paper. "But this — this Austrian madness. No warning, no parley; a pistol to Servia's head!"

Julian's voice overtopped Sir William's. "It amounts to the abject humiliation of Servia — or war."

"Servia will accept Austria's terms," said Miss Greta, quietly.

"Never!" Julian shouted. "All the chancelleries of Europe will join in protest."

Sir William paused in his trot up and down that end of the hall. "If Russia goes in, Germany can't stay out. This time to-morrow Europe may be ablaze."

The supposition, sounding through those piping times of peace, rang fantastic. Napier remembered, long after, how he had looked round Kirklamont hall and saw that apart from Sir William there was n't a soul there who believed in the possibility of war, except one. That one — Miss Greta.

"Monstrous as it would be to force Servia into political slavery," Julian admitted gravely, "there would be one thing worse."

Nan at last lifted her voice. "What would the worst thing be?"

"War," answered Julian.

"What, what!" Sir William caught him up. "There are worse things than war, young man."

"There 's nothing worse than war. Fortunately, we 've reached a place where the mass of the people know that."

As the awful prospect unfolded, people were not appalled, though they said they were. They were n't even unhappy. They were far too excited. And to be excited about matters of world-wide importance is to be lifted out of the petty round and to catch at the crumbs of greatness.

Napier went up to town with Sir William. At close quarters with official minds, the younger man shared those hours of anxious hope, bred by the earlier interchange between Petersburg and Berlin, London and Belgrade.

Still, and without ceasing, though too late, as was seen in the retrospect, England worked for peace.

Not even the formal declaration of war on Servia, made by Austria on the Tuesday following that fateful Friday, arrested the effort of the British Government to avert the catastrophe.

Five days after the ultimatum discussion in Kirklamont Hall, the German demand was made for British neutrality and the first shots were fired at Belgrade.

Julian's letters in those days registered merely the seething and boiling in the caldron of his separatist soul. His horror of the Mittel-Europa plot, as it began to unroll, was lost in his horror of the spread, the deliberate inflammation, of what he called the "war cancer."

Napier flung the letters into the waste-paper basket and forgot them. But as he went about his work, transmitting cryptic telephone calls or hurrying to and fro with confidential messages, all incongruously a girl's face would flicker before him like a white flower before the eyes of one running at top speed through danger-haunted woods at night.

Those were the hours when Great Britain was pressing the most momentous question ever framed by diplomacy: Was France, was Germany, going to respect the neutrality of Belgium? Then the moment when France cried, "Yes," and Germany's silence was louder in the instructed ear than roar of cannon.

Sir William had sat in the war councils, and hour after hour sat in smaller groups, laboring with the best minds to find a way to stay the spread of the contagion. When Sir William came to a place where nothing more could be

hoped for or immediately be done, he found that, for the first time in his life, he was unable to sleep. Country air, home, if only for a single round of the clock.

They came back to Kirklamont to find, in outward seeming, all unchanged. The fact struck sharply on the strained senses of the two men who drove up from Inverness toward noon on the first Monday in that fateful August. Late Saturday night Germany had declared war on Russia, and France was already invaded.

In the hall at Kirklamont Lady McIntyre sat with her family, her Russian embroidery, and her boar-hounds. She came to meet her husband with, "William, dear! And what's the news?"

Madge ran, her red hair all abroad, to embrace her father. Bobby, on the point of going upstairs, changed his mind.

Sir William met interrogation testily.

Gavan Napier's first impression on entering the hall had been of the still intensity of Miss Greta's gaze; perhaps he was the more struck by it because it was n't on himself. On Sir William. As she closed the book she 'd been reading aloud and rose, the look was gone. Amid the heats of midsummer and of war she stood cool, pearl-powdery, sweet, with a smile for Napier now, and an expression of deferential welcome for Sir William. Miss Greta left to other folk all worrying questions aimed at jaded and travel-worn men.

No, Sir William was n't going to sleep till after luncheon. But he was hot and dusty, he would go up. . . .

They would have tackled Napier, but he, too, escaped hard upon Sir William's heels.

As Napier followed his chief down three quarters of an hour later, a laugh floated up. Nan Ellis.

She and Bobby sat on the sofa, taking and giving lessons in the tying of sailors' knots. She looked up carelessly enough at Napier's appearance. "How do you do? Do *you* know any good knots? I thought you would n't."

"She is prettier than I remembered," he said to himself.

Sir William, on the hearth-rug, showed a man already refreshed.

"What 's this about the papers?" This raised voice commanded the hall.

"Yes, my dear William, for the third time. That was why we had to try to get our news from London. But they were horrid, yesterday, about telling us anything. It 's not very pleasant," — Lady McIntyre revealed her conception of the use of war news — "when neighbors call, expecting us to know the latest, and find we have n't heard a word since Saturday morning."

"Well, then," — Sir William filled the hiatus with a single sentence — "at seven o'clock on Saturday evening Germany declared war on Russia."

Instantly the hall was full of hubbub. The excitement bred by that tremendous fact reached even Lady McIntyre. "Dear me! I wonder what the Pforzheims will say to that. They *will* be astonished."

Miss Greta went through the motions of surprise. "Has it really come?"

Napier, observing her narrowly, said to himself. "She knew." And then, "How did she know?"

Julian Grant came hurrying in with excited face. Before he had spoken to anybody else or so much as looked

at Nan: "Tell us, Sir William; it 's only in the country, is n't it, that people are talking wildly about England being mixed up in this horrible business?"

"People talk everywhere," Sir William said crustily.

After Sir William's rebuff, Julian had gone over and sat down by Nan. It was Miss Greta who did the talking.

Napier saw her leaning across Nan to engage Mr. Grant. Most gentle she was, ingratiating. As he strolled nearer, Napier heard one or two of her leading questions, put with an air of having no idea how straight they went to the heart of the matter.

"Oh, you think that? I should *so* like to know why."

Sir William, pretending not to listen, pretending to talk to Madge, lost no word; neither Julian's denunciation of the idea of England's interfering, nor Miss Greta's, "Well, it would be quixotic. And whatever her enemies may say, England is not quixotic." It was the kind of little compliment with a sting in its tail that Miss Greta could deliver with an innocence that must, Napier decided, console her for many an enforced piece of self-suppression.

"'Quixotic!'" Julian began to tell how much worse it would be than that.

Fury rose in Sir William. Napier saw it getting into his eyebrows. Miss Greta saw it, too, Napier could have sworn. Oh, she knew perfectly what she was about. "It *is* difficult," — she supplemented Julian's assurance — "very difficult, to see how England could come in, with civil war ready to break out at any minute. She would be sacrificing herself for what?" Miss Greta inquired in her suave voice.

"The statesman who would advocate it," said Julian, "would be committing suicide."

Sir William swung round. "You 're wide enough of the mark *this* time."

"You don't mean —"

"Our obligations to France —" Sir William began.

"What obligations?" the young man demanded. "The country has n't endorsed any obligations." He jumped up and faced Sir William on the hearth-rug. "If behind our backs they 've gone and committed us —" Julian's dark eyes flashed a threat of dire reprisal. Provisionally he wiped the floor with those (including, all too flagrantly, the Laird of Kirklamont) who might, "in their colossal ineptitude, want to commit this nation to war."

"That 's *your* opinion," said Sir William, growing bright red under the friction. "You seem to think we have no right to ours."

Julian halted an instant before the problem. "How much right *has* a man to the wrong opinion?" Upon the answer to that, he knew, had hung much of the history of politics and religion. In another mood Julian would have maintained, till all was blue, that an intelligent bricklayer had as much right to a voice in the policy of the country as a peer of the realm. None the less, in his heart of hearts, as Napier was whimsically aware, Sir Julian felt that, for all Sir William's official position, he *had n't* any such valid right to press his views as had a Grant of Abergarry. Between mirth and consternation, Napier realized that this was the key to the renewed outpouring. It was not so much Julian, but a Grant, very properly telling a McIntyre things good for him to know.

In the heat and fury of the discussion which she had so adroitly precipitated, Miss Greta stretched out a hand and took up her knitting. She sat there with bent head.

"Who? The democracy of England!" Julian was crying to Sir William's angry, "Who is going to prevent?"

"If politicians don't know that, they 'll learn it to their cost. English participation in this war is impossible."

"So little impossible," Sir William barked back, "that we'll be in it up to the neck."

There was a moment's hush in the hall, before everybody, except Miss Greta, began to talk at once. Miss Greta never lifted her head. She did not so much as lift her eyes. Napier saw that she was following the success of her ruse with an intensity that held her hands immovable, as though the rapid fingers had been caught, tied fast, in those "field-gray" filaments she wove, as though her palms had been skewered through by the shining steel of her long needles. They stuck out at right angles, seeming to transfix the rigid, death-white hands.

"Never! never!" Julian had cried out at the top of his voice.

"And if we were n't in it," Sir William shouted, "we 'd be wiped off the map. What 's more, we 'd deserve to be."

"I tell you," Julian vociferated, "England will never consent to be dragged into this quarrel."

"England won't be dragged in. She will go in because it would be a shame to keep out. She *is* in!"

Napier sat damning himself with uncommon vigor. Idiot! that he had n't foreseen the Von Schwarzenberg's agile apprehension of this new use to which Nanchen's lover might be put. Too late the realization that her

well have said it aloud. She smiled at him across the board. The china-blue eyes were as hard as big alley marbles. She raised her cider-glass to her lips.

Nan turned to her impulsively. "Do you still think —" She stared at the smashed tumbler and the cascade down Miss Greta's pink frock.

"Oh, Nan dear, my new dress!"

"Me? Do you mean — did I do that? Oh, my! I'm most terribly sorry!"

"If I sponge it off instantly —" Greta rose. Nan rose.

Madge rose. "I'll help you," she said.

"Certainly not!" Miss Greta cast back a look not to be mistaken, and hurried off, holding her skirt out in front of her and looking at it with a very passion of concern.

Should he bolt after her? Ridiculous! How could he dog the steps of a woman going upstairs to sponge her frock!

Should he go outside and waylay the messenger? He had n't even the flimsiest excuse, except one that was n't producible, unless he could catch her red-handed. To catch her sending a note to Ernst Pforzheim, what would that prove? Would n't any of us in her place want to share such tremendous news with our compatriots, let alone with a lover?

She was away less than eleven minutes. Napier timed her. When she came back she had on a different skirt and a subtly different expression. Whatever had been on her mind as well as on her dress, she had got rid of both. The others still argued and speculated. The staggering news was new to them. Curiously, it was already old to

Napier, old and grim and implacable. He shoved it wearily aside. While Miss Greta's head was bent and she thought him covertly eyeing her, Napier drank refreshment out of the face at her side. The little girl from over the water, what was it she did to him? The mystery of these things.

Napier took Julian out on the terrace to cool off, though he said it was to smoke. "I say, day and night for over a week I 've heard nothing but war. Talk to me about something pleasant," he said. It was a plain lead, but Julian was a mole of a man.

"What do you call pleasant in a world like this?"

"Oh, several things." From where they sat they could see Nan Ellis under the trees at the entrance to the park, and Wildfire flying back and forth through the air — as Nan urged the swing.

Napier remembered that, in all the heady talk before and during luncheon, Julian had hardly looked at the girl. When she spoke he did n't hear. Napier sat now studying his friend. "Don't say I did n't warn you. There 's one person who 'll be precious tired of all this war-talk if it goes on."

Julian lifted absent eyes. "Nan? Not a bit of it. You don't know Nan. Whenever I stray to personal affairs, it 's, 'Come and show me on the map where Luxemburg is,' and, 'Just where have they crossed the French border?'"

"I suppose you 're not by any chance so taken up telling her where the Germans are in France that you don't know whereabouts you are with America?"

He *did n't* know. He 'd been waiting till he could see

his way clear to detach the girl from Miss Greta. And then this appalling business —

Napier's silence seemed to convey to Julian some hint of an unspoken arraignment. She had written to her mother, he said, in extenuation. "Yes, about me. She is devoted to her mother. Yes, I 've been thinking it over. You see, the Germans — "

"God bless my soul! Let 's leave the Germans to stew in their own juice an hour or two!" Gavan got up and walked back and forth in front of the two garden chairs and of the man left sitting there. More than by any previous extravagance of Julian's, some of the things he said at luncheon had angered Napier. They fairly made Sir William choke. They were of a character to make Sir James Grant incline to choke the speaker. *That* was the knowledge which opened the door to the fear that clutched at Napier — fear of himself. Fear of the temptation revealed in this growing conviction of his, that if he let Julian drift on the new tide that was sweeping in, it would carry him away, far beyond the securities, the privileges of a favored son of the old order. Almost certainly it would carry him away from Nan Ellis. Whether an illusion or not, Napier felt that he had only to sit there in the other chair and do nothing, to see Julian blindly "do for" himself. As he walked up and down, Napier discoursed upon woman.

"You mean," Julian said, with the air of the docile disciple receiving a brand-new doctrine, "you mean that, in spite of feeling sure of her — bless her! — you think I ought to get something definite settled this afternoon?"

"You certainly ought to find out where you stand. You

can't let it drift." He knew that what he really meant was that *he* could n't. He got up and walked away toward the loch.

On his way back, Julian was coming with that nervous step to meet him. Well, he 'd spoken to her. She admitted she was fond of him. "But I don't want to marry you," she had said. "I told her," he went on, "that I could n't believe that. Fortunately for me, for I did n't see how I could bear it. 'You don't want to marry *anybody* just now?' I suggested. And what on earth do you think she said?"

"How do *I* know!" Napier returned irritably.

"She said, 'Well, I 'll just see about that! You must n't go pulling me up by the roots to see how I 'm growing,' she said. 'It puts me back.' And then I very nearly took hold of her. But all I did was to sit tight and say: 'Which *way* are you growing, Nan? If *I* can't find out, I 'll have to get Gavan to.' 'You 'd ask Gavan!' And she looked so startled, I laughed. 'So you don't want Gavan to know how you behave,' I said. I was n't surprised!"

He brought it out with an incredible lightheartedness. If underneath his surface equability Julian was really agitated, shaken, torn, it was not on the score of his own and Nan's future. It was for the immediate fate of Europe. He swung back to it as they came in sight of the hall. "I was thinking as I came along that our diplomacy for the last twenty years —"

A servant crossed the lawn to meet them with two telegrams for Sir William.

"And the telephone, sir. Sir William left word that

you — Yes, London, sir." Napier hurried back to his post.

Tommy Durrant was at the other end — a message for Sir William from the Prime Minister. Napier wrote it down. He 'd ring Tommy up before six. Any more news? King Albert's letter, asking for the support of England, had been read in the House with immense effect. "In spite of some labor opposition, they 'll vote the credit to-night; you 'll see. If the German fleet molests the French, we 'll be on hand!" cried Tommy along the wire. "Army? Mobilizing over night. Kitchener 's back from Egypt."

Under the renewal of the hammer-strokes, Napier's sense of a world blindly driven to some incredible doom gave to the family group, when he rejoined it, an air of unreality. And this in spite of the fact that Miss Greta did not make the mistake of ignoring the subject which in all minds usurped the foreground.

She made her own little contribution with an air of engaging frankness. "If the war were going to be fought out on sea, the British fleet, of course — But you would n't say yourself, would you, that the British were a military people?"

"Not in the sense that Germany is," Napier agreed.

"In no sense at all," said Julian.

"But Germany! Every son of Germany is a soldier!" Miss Greta's tone was just a trifle too superior.

But was n't she right? Even the Pforzheims. They, too, were soldiers. These friendly, slightly ridiculous neighbors underwent in Napier's mind a sudden and violent transformation. They stripped off their stage

tweeds, their check shirts, their superabundant jewelry; they stood in uniform. Severe, infinitely *praktisch,* six foot, each, of formidable enemy.

After tea there was a general movement.

"Coming for a stroll?" Julian stood looking down at Nan.

"Yes, but it *is* cold toward sunset in this Scotland of yours. I must have my jacket."

"Oh, well, where is it?" he demanded, with a touch of his absentminded impatience.

She looked at him. "*I* don't know. In the coat-room, perhaps. You 'll find it somewhere."

"Do you think I shall?" he questioned dubiously. "What 's it like?"

"Well, of all things!" She sat up very straight. "You mean to say you never noticed? It is n't the *very least* like anybody else's."

"Oh, I dare say I 'll remember it all right when I see it." Julian retired meekly to the coat-room.

Nan brought her eyes down from the florid, gilt molding above the window to the level of Napier's face.

"You look worried," she announced.

"I am worried."

"Just about the war — nothing particular?"

Yes, there was one thing in particular. "One thing I can't honestly say I 'm happy about." His speech slowed under the quick shifting of light and shadow in her eyes. What did she think he had been going to say when he began that brought that darkening as he ended, "I can't honestly say I am happy about Julian."

"About *Julian!*"

Bobby nodded. "Glenfallon's shut up."

"But they *can't* be gone for good. *Can* they?" Lady McIntyre turned to Miss Greta.

"How should I know?" The answer came a trifle too quickly.

Sir William got into the car. Napier followed him. He leaned over the slammed door. "When do you say they went?" he asked Bobby.

"Late last night. Bag and baggage."

CHAPTER VII

THOSE were the days when all thoughts turned to th fleet. The expected leave of Jim McIntyre, and o many a sailor son, had been cancelled. Terrible and glori ous things were happening in the element ruled b Britannia. Only the stern discretion of the Admiralt prevented detailed knowledge. Maintenance of this self denying ordinance on the part of the authorities could no prevent the rumors, which ran about, of a decisive nava engagement. Lady McIntyre, lying awake at night, dis tinctly heard the boom of guns off the Dogger Bank. He beloved Jim (God keep him!) was crumpling up the Ger mans in the North Sea.

It was something to have Colin home from Aldersho and Neil from Shorncliffe. The fact that the two youn soldiers were granted leave because they were going off o active service was hidden from their mother.

The knowledge brought Sir William post-haste fron London. His proud eyes went from the natty-lookin Neil, to the taller, elder soldier with the ugly, hones face. The father's gaze rested longest there. "If yo knew the trouble I had — I sha'n't try it again. Thi place is too far away at such a time."

Lady McIntyre inquired anxiously for admiralty news

"Well, the Turks have got the *Breslau* and the *Goeben*." Sir William glanced at his sons. They said nothing.

"Oh, *that*," said his wife. "I mean about the great North Sea engagements."

"The movements of the fleet are n't published."

"Published! Of *course* not," retorted Lady McIntyre. "But that 's no reason they should n't tell you."

"Well, I 'm afraid they have n't."

"Nonsense! It 's just because you 've grown so secretive all of a sudden. You 're nearly as bad as Colin. I *do* wish Jim would write!" A rush of tears blurred the blueness of her eyes. Evidently the presence of the other sons only emphasized for the mother the absence of her sailor. "Surely, William, you know about the naval battle. Why, I hear the guns all night long!"

"In your head, my dear," said Sir William, gently.

There was a moment's poignant silence. In truth, the reverberation of those guns of rumor shook all hearts.

"Well, Neil, go on," — Madge returned to her low chair at Miss Greta's other side. "You were telling us about the new army regulations. Go on."

Miss Greta had fixed her eyes on Napier with that "savior of my life," expression that he was coming to know. He made an ungrateful return. "And how is your 'little friend'?"

"Oh, Nan is well, thank you."

"She ought to be back by now." Lady McIntyre was making a brave effort to put away fears for her sailor. "Nan," she explained to Napier, "very kindly agreed to take the car and do an errand or two which Miss Greta's slight headache —"

The thought flashed across Napier's mind of the far worse pang it would have cost Miss Greta to be away when

official news was arriving hot and hot. She listened now to Sir William's reasons why Liège could hold out indefinitely.

Over the shrubberies the winged hat of the girl messenger rose against the landscape, and again, hardly had the car swerved round to the door, before, with that same blackbird-over-the-hedge action, she was out of the car and coming into the hall. "Yes, I did all the commissions, and in about half the time you said. Oh, Sir William!" She went up and shook hands. "You see, I am here still." She stood childishly in front of him, as if waiting for a further extension of playtime.

"That's right, and you look as if it agreed with you."

"Oh, it *does!*" She gave her hand to Napier. And then, turning with one of her quick movements, she found a singular thing to say to a captain of the Black Watch and a young gentleman who held a commission in the Seaforths. "I've seen soldiers, Scotch soldiers! They *did* look funny!"

"Funny!" said Sir William. The two elder sons turned away their eyes. Bobby grinned and contorted his legs. . . .

"Yes, soldiers wearing aprons."

"I suppose you mean kilts," said Sir William. "Did you never see —"

"Oh, yes, of course, on the stage, and in pictures. But these soldiers had on the funniest little brown aprons *over* their kilts."

"Temporary measure," said Colin, slowly. "They'll soon be all in khaki."

"And it was awfully difficult to get your check cashed."

She turned toward Lady McIntyre. "They say now there is n't any silver left in Scotland. And in *your* town there is n't even copper. I hope you don't mind; I had to take stamps in change. There," — she produced a roll of postal-orders — "are what we 'll have to use for money now, they say."

Lady McIntyre protested, but Sir William indorsed the news. Like the khaki aprons, a "temporary measure." Miss Nan made her accounting.

"All these horrid little scraps of paper!" Lady McIntyre complained.

"You can always change them for gold," Neil said.

"If you do, you must keep it circulating," warned Sir William. "No hoarding of gold!"

"But we can't get any more — that 's just the trouble."

"You ought to have asked Miss Nan," said Madge.

"But I did, and Nan had n't any."

"Why, I saw *piles* of gold on your table when I went up to the inn with Miss Greta's note yesterday!"

"Yes; I 'd got it out for her — all I had."

Miss von Schwarzenberg was leaning against the back of the settle. "What a pity!" she said quietly. "I wish I 'd known you wanted gold."

"But, *dear* Greta, I *said* —"

"Did you? I could n't have taken it in. It 's gone now. To a poor person in desperate straits — A stranded American. That was why I borrowed it."

"Bor-*ch*-rowed it," she said, with the vanishing "ch" like a ghost of the final sound in the Scots word "loch."

Captain Colin was looking at her from under his thick, whitey-yellow eyebrows — in spite of the fact that his

father was talking to him very earnestly about the tactics of the German Army. Beyond a doubt, consciousness of Miss Greta's foreignness was growing. Her slight burring of the "r" had never sounded so marked as it did to-day. For all her long residence in the States, Miss Greta was far more German than anybody in the Kirklamont circle had quite realized until the war. And now very plainly this "Germanism" was taking its place as a bar to conversation, a something still not productive of hostility so much as of *gêne*.

"I 'd be so grateful, my dear," Lady McIntyre said half aside to Nan, "if you 'd make Greta bathe her temples and lie down."

"Yes, let us go. All this —" Nan looked round the hall through a sudden bewilderment of compunction which fell like a veil over her brightness — "all this is dreadful for you."

"For me! Oh, no!" — Miss Greta held her head higher than ever — "it 's not dreadful for *me*." She smiled a little fiercely, — to Napier's sense — as she left the hall, Madge on one side and Nan on the other.

When Sir William went off with his three sons for a stroll, Lady McIntyre accompanied them as far as the gate.

She brought back into the hall a face more agitated than Napier had ever seen it. Irresolute, miserable, she paused on her way to the sofa where Napier sat, trying to read. "Colin," she jerked out in a guarded voice, "has the *strangest* notions!" The pale eyes looked round more helpless than ever. "He says Greta tried to pump him about army matters, and he 's sorry he did n't warn Neil!

He 's going to. Colin said,— oh, in the unkindest way! 'That woman ought to go home!' 'Home?' I said, 'why, this is Greta's home!' 'No, it is n't,' he said; 'Germany 's her home, and she ought to go there!' Oh, Colin can be very hard when he likes!" She choked back her tears, as Miss Ellis came running down the stairs. "What is it?" Lady McIntyre started to her feet. "Is Greta worse?"

"Oh, no. It 's only Ju— Mr. Grant has got back. We saw him coming across the —"

He stood in the doorway. Nan went forward, hand out, welcome in every lineament, a kind of all-enfolding affection in the forward inclination of the whole, lightly poised figure.

Napier looked on dully.

Though Julian was smiling as he took the girl's hand, she said, with quick intuition of his mood, "What 's happened?" And after he 'd come in and greeted the others, "Are n't they well, your father and mother?" she persisted gently. "They have n't come? I *am* sorry! I knew something was wrong." She folded her sympathy round him like a cloak.

"It is n't their not coming." He dropped into a chair. "It 's the stuff I 've had to listen to in town. And in the railway carriages too. The colossal tomfoolery — the — the indecent way people were jubilating over the greatest disaster in history. This is the kind of fierce test that people go down under. They 'd be ashamed to be unfair, lying, and greedy for themselves. They think it 's a merit to be unfair, lying, and greedy for England."

Lady McIntyre cast her eye up the staircase, whither

her thoughts had already gone. She was in the act of getting up, when Julian broke out moodily, "And the way people already are beginning to talk and behave about the Germans in England!" He had his instances.

Napier pointed out that, regrettable as these manifestations were, they were fewer and of a much milder character with us than in other countries. He spoke of ill-treatment in Germany and Austria of retiring ambassadors and even of neutrals. He turned to Nan Ellis. "*Your* countrymen could tell you a tale of these last days that would make you open your eyes. Ask your ambassador."

"If the Germans really did," Julian began; but Napier picked him up smartly, "You forget, we *know*."

"Well, well, it's one proof the more, if we needed the more, that war brutalizes noncombatants as well as combatants."

Lady McIntyre shook her ear-rings desparingly. "Aromatic vinegar," she murmured, as she went upstairs.

While Julian exposed diplomacy and denounced governments, Nan sat, chin in hand, drinking it in, as if she recognized in these doctrines that true faith for which all her life she had been thirsting. Under the subtle flattery, Julian, in spite of weariness, waxed yet more eloquent. Napier pulled out his watch and made a low exclamation, intended to indicate some pressing business overdue. He went up the stairs two steps at a time. And yet the pace was n't quick enough to please him. Away, he must get away. Julian had been pitying Colin and Neil, "pawns in the great game." Napier knew now that he envied them. Oh, that he too might go and fight! He

walked to and fro in his room in the first access of that fever that was to beset him sore until he should be standing in the trenches of the Somme. With Julian's denunciation of war nagging at his ears, Napier hailed war as the Great Simplification. Not only of international troubles, but of private ones. Instead of ten thousand struggles, one.

Well, at all events, he could n't, as he now realized (and happily, by reason of the great crisis, he was n't going to be asked to) stay here in Scotland and look on at this love-making! War had its uses, even to the civilian.

An hour later he was still sitting there, back to the window, smoking innumerable cigarettes and trying to read his novel. A light, rattling sound made him turn round. A fine hail on the window-panes this cloudless August evening. He looked out.

Julian was down below with a handful of coarse sand. A sign: Come down.

What now?

The hall was empty, except of the footmen beginning to lay tea. Outside Julian waited.

"You 're off to London to-morrow, too," he began. "Is that the idea?"

"Yes, that was the idea."

"Well, then there 's precious little time." He was threading a way through the shrubberies to a half-concealed garden bench.

"I 've been wanting your advice, Gavan. The fact is," — he smiled as he made the confession — "I don't know quite where I am."

"I should have thought you must be in a happier place

1316561

than most mortals." Napier sat down on a half-concealed wooden seat.

Julian joined him with an eager, "What makes you say that?"

"Well, it must be plain to the blindest she is very fond of you."

"You think she is?" He sat wondering. Then he presented the grievance closest to hand. "She would n't let me kiss her just now, and I 've been away three whole days."

"She has let you before?"

"Yes."

"As if she was in love with you?"

"She *must* be, or else she would n't, would she, now? A girl like that?"

Napier tried to ask if these scenes were of frequent occurrence, whether they were courted or evaded. The question stuck in his throat. And then, exactly as if he had spoken, Julian answered.

"She 's a little capricious about that kind of thing. But," — he turned trustfully to his friend — "girls often *are,* are n't they?"

Napier sat there without speaking. "I wondered," Julian went on, "if it could possibly mean the sort of disapproval that 's putting me into other people's black books — about this devil's mess of a war. But you saw she took quite a rational view about that."

"I saw she took *your* view. As to its being rational — "

"Oh, well, we won't say any more about that *now.* I 've talked war till I 'm sick. I thought I was coming back here to — something I don't find."

Into Napier's silence Julian dropped the suggestion. "It may only be that I don't understand women." In his quandary Napier wondered aloud whether you ever did understand a person brought up in a different country.

"Or in your own," Julian said moodily. "People I've known since I was a baby I begin to realize I've never known at all!"

"Oh, come, it isn't as bad as that, though we're all of us having our eyes opened these days. Those Pforzheims now; I'm persuaded they got hold of the Kirklamont newspapers and kept them back with the express idea of giving Greta an excuse for getting the official news they wanted."

Julian stared, and then he turned his head wearily away. "What rot!"

The tone nettled Napier. "You seem to have forgotten your own suspicions of that woman."

"They were never of *that* sort, thank God!" Julian flung out. "I didn't like the idea of Nan's friend carrying on a doubtful love affair — But that's all pettiness. The awful actualities of war have brought fine things to the surface in Greta von Schwarzenberg's character."

Napier told himself that he knew what had been brought to the surface, and what effect that bringing had had on Julian.

The spectacle of injustice, or even the danger of injustice, would at any time make Julian Grant forget his own interests and yours and anybody's who wasn't being actively oppressed.

"Have you been to Gull Island since?"

"I 've had no time for picnicking," Julian answered shortly.

"Well, since you 're championing Schwarzenberg, it 's your business to see she is n't made a tool of. You heard how the Pforzheims vanished. I 've wondered," — Napier found it curiously difficult to go on. There was a quality — he had noticed it before — a something in Julian's frankness which put astuteness out of countenance, something that made suspicion seem not only vulgar but melodramatic. Napier felt obliged to throw a dash of whimsicality, of confessed extravagance, into the speculation, "Whether the reason we were n't allowed to land on Gull Island was those Pforzheims. They may have made an emergency camp out of your Smugglers' Cave."

Julian's weary disgust lightened a little. "I had no notion you were so romantic, Gavan."

"Very well, then. If you won't look into the matter, I must get some one else. And set afoot a new crop of rumors. Risk involving Sir William in responsibility for — "

"Oh, see here! I 'll go, and hold an inquisition on the gulls and cormorants."

Napier thanked him a little sheepishly. "Of course I don't expect you to find anything. I only feel we 've got to make sure."

CHAPTER VIII

SIR WILLIAM and Napier returned to London to face those days of intolerable suspense, when men carried about like a waking nightmare the new proof that an impregnable fortress was a thing of the past. The defenses of Liège had failed. A vast system of forts had been pounded into ruin. Through breach after breach, the German hosts were pouring. People far away from the scenes of carnage and chaos woke in the night under a clutch of dread. What is it? What's the matter with life? *The Germans!* On and on they were coming, and nothing, it seemed, could stop them.

Then came the Mons retreat and the Battle of the Marne. Belgium was in ruins, but the German flood had been stayed. Sir William, worn and aged after a second heart attack, carefully concealed from every one except the doctor, and Gavan came down from London to spend Saturday night and Sunday at the place he had taken on the Essex coast. Apart from public anxieties, Sir William had been subject to the annoyance of questions in the House, about his chauffeur — a member of his Majesty's Government could n't be driven about by an unnaturalized German. A new chauffeur had brought Sir William from town.

"Do say you are going to like the house, William, dear!"

his wife implored on the familiar note, before he had time to see anything beyond the entrance and the drawing-room. "Remember how little time we had to find anything near enough for you. But talk about it's being a *furnished* house!"

"Great luck to find such a place," Napier reassured her. "How did you hear of it?"

Lady McIntyre shook her head, as with an effort to shake some clear recollection out of the inner disorder. "We heard of so many! But this — I think Greta saw an advertisement somewhere about this one. I had to come and do the inspecting because of that silliness about getting a permit for Greta."

"Seems all right," said Sir William, rattling his seals as he joined Napier in the bay-window.

"Well, you would n't have said that if you 'd seen it as those people left it. When I went back to Kirklamont, I told Greta, the hideous bareness — oh, it would never do! But she simply insisted on my going to bed." Lady McIntyre smiled at confession of that helplessness which for long years had, after her beauty, been her strongest card. "Greta said everything would be all right. You had arranged about the silly permit, and the very next day she came down, all by herself, and just took hold."

Sir William glanced at Napier, as he asked his wife where Miss Greta was now.

"She 's closing up Kirklamont. That is, she *has* closed it up. They 're coming at five forty-five, Greta and the children and Miss Ellis. I 've come to like that Ellis girl. And I believe Madge has, too, though she won't say so."

Sir William had been walking about, opening doors,

looking out of windows. "Seems the very thing. Capital view, too! I congratulate you, my dear."

She beamed, "Don't congratulate me. It's Greta."

"Even the chairs are just right!" Sir William sank down in one by the open French window.

Lady McIntyre laughed, delighted. "It's your own chair! out of the library at Kirklamont."

"Never!" said Sir William, staring down at the arms, first on one side and then on the other.

"Greta *said* you'd be glad of your own special chair when you came home tired!"

"Well, she's right." He abandoned himself a moment to the embrace of his old friend.

"I *knew* you'd be surprised!" Lady McIntyre pattered on. "*I* was. I should have thought of chairs and things myself, if it had n't been called 'a furnished house.' And *charged* for as a furnished house! But I should never have thought of furnishing a furnished — And even if I *had*, I should have been appalled at the idea of packing up heavy furniture and moving it about this way. Linen and silver, of course, and a few vases, and my china cats, just to give a feeling of home, but a thing like a great hulking armchair *with a reading desk — !*"

"Yes," Sir William indulged her, "I should as soon have thought of hoicking up my bed."

"Your bed has been hoicked up," she triumphed. "Greta did n't forget you were very particular about your bed."

"You don't say so."

"Oh, yes. You said once the reason you'd never been back to Germany was because of the beds. I was afraid

at the time she'd feel that. But you see how *beautifully* she's taken it. And what about the war, William?" she said, in exactly the same tone.

Sir William was feeling absently for his cigar-case. "Are they still slaughtering those poor Belgians? Matches? I'm sure there must be matches somewhere." She got up and looked vaguely about the big room, as though she expected the matches to come running like a dog that hears its name called. "Anybody but Greta might forget a little thing like that. There! I told you so!" she exclaimed, as Napier produced a box from the far side of the clock. "What do *you* say, Mr. Napier? Will it be over by Christmas? Greta is sure it will."

"H'm! H'm! About Miss Greta,"— Sir William struck in with that same exchange of glances the name had called forth at the beginning. "Gavan and I met the inspector of police as we came through the station. New broom. In a great taking. He'd been hauled over the coals, it seems, by an old retired colonel hereabouts — fella called McManus. Has a place a little way down the coast. These retired men are the devil. They don't know they're retired. This fella McManus got wind of a German lady who was here for a week and who, he said, went about poking her nose everywhere."

"She *had* to poke her nose to get housemaids and an odd man. But McManus! *He* must be an old horror."

"Well, that's what he said, 'Poking her nose everywhere,' when he lodged his complaint with the inspector. Very decent fella, the inspector."

"Lodged a complaint!" Lady McIntyre echoed. "Against a member of our household."

"Yes, yes. It's all right. I told the inspector we knew all about Miss von Schwarzenberg, and could absolutely vouch for her."

"Here she is," said Napier from the window.

In another minute Madge and Bobby were bursting in, followed by the other two. Miss von Schwarzenberg, wearing a new look of subdued triumph. The American, eager, stirred, smiling in Napier's direction, and yet far from seeming as happy as the girl adored by Julian should be.

Madge and Bobby filled the room with their accounts of the queer journey, the long stoppages, the waiting for government trains to pass, and the way the troops seemed to be moving about the country.

"Miss Greta thought it was n't soldiers," Bobby threw in. "*She* says, coal for the fleet."

"That was only at first," Madge defended Miss Greta, "before we found out that we were held up for another — a perfectly *thrilling* reason! But it 's a dead secret, is n't it, Miss Greta?"

"The deadest kind," she answered, as she bent her head for Nan to unpin her veil.

"*Russians!*" said Madge in a loud stage whisper. "They 're sending *armies* of 'em."

"Russians?" Lady McIntyre blinked rapidly and looked at the door in a perturbed way.

"Yes, to fight the —" Bobby turned tactfully to his father. "I 'll be bound *you* know all about it."

"Not a syllable."

Madge laughed. "Dear old Daddy!" she said patronizingly. "Well, *we* know, so you need n't keep it up.

And it 's an awfully good dodge. Think of the surprise it 'll be."

"It would be a surprise, right enough," her father admitted.

"You see," Bobby continued, to enlighten his mama, "the North Sea 's full of mines, so they 've shipped the Russian troops from Archangel, landed 'em in Scotland, and they 're rushing 'em through England to the front."

Whether Sir William had any knowledge of this spirited proceeding or not, Bobby had plenty. He 'd collected impressions on the journey.

Sir William was occupied in paying facetious tribute to Miss Greta for her manipulation of beds and arm-chairs. "Eh? what?" he interrupted himself to say to a footman whom he discovered unexpectedly behind the barrier of the reading-desk. "Did n't you hear? Tea for these ladies."

"Beg pardon, Sir William, but there 's an inspector of police —"

"Inspector! What 's he want *now?*"

"He — a — well, sir, he 'd like to speak to you for a moment, sir."

Sir William rose rather testily and went out. He took the precaution to turn back and shut the door, after the footman had followed him across the threshold.

"Well," said Miss Greta brightly to Madge, "I am wondering whether you will like your room. You 'll find it next mine. You remember the plan I drew?"

"Oh, yes. I 'll go up after tea. Simply ravenous!"

Miss Greta bent toward the girl. "We are n't fit to sit down to tea."

Wildfire turned to protest. She seemed to read in the soft face a resolution no stranger would have detected either there, or in the words, "I'm going up too, in a minute. I 'll come for you." Madge went quietly out.

Through the open window only the voices from the next room were audible, not the words. Lady McIntyre was all too aware of them.

Miss Greta joined Napier at the window. "Pretty view, don't you think?" She, too, listened to those accents in the next room.

As the door opened, her eyelids fluttered, but she never looked round. The footman was back again with an excuse instead of tea.

"It 's the range, m'lady. It *seems*,"— hurriedly he appeared to apologize for a stove suspected of an untimely desire for taking a stroll — "it *seems* to 'ave gone hout. But the tea won't be long. And Sir William says will Miss von Sworsenburg kindly step into the next room."

CHAPTER IX

MISS VON "SWORSENBURG" had obliged with a cloudless face. It was Lady McIntyre who looked disturbed, even guilty. She took refuge in a work-bag, which she unhooked from the back of her chair. She jerked it open hurriedly on her knees and bent her head to rummage in the depths. Conversation between Napier and Nan languished. Both were listening to those voices in the next room.

The door opened abruptly and in bustled Sir William, ruffling up the little hair he had left and looking the very picture of discomfort.

"Perfect dolt, that fella!" he threw over his shoulder to Miss Greta.

She followed Sir William with an air of calmness, not to say detachment, that even she, past mistress in the art of conveying the finer shades of superiority, had never excelled. "I left my gloves, I think," she said.

Sir William had gone to the bell and rung twice. "That fella says she ought to go and register. Makes out he 'll get into trouble if she does n't go at once."

"*Register,* William? What nonsense! Why on earth should *she?*"

"Why? Oh, the permit was informal, and only for a given time. Silly idiots!"

"Well, well," his wife soothed him, "tell the creatures, if they're in such a ridiculous hurry — she'll motor over to-morrow."

"To-morrow won't do. He's had orders. It's got to be to-night." Sir William spoke in his most testy tone.

Nan had sprung up and gone to her friend. Napier, too, had come forward. He picked up the missing gloves.

"Oh, thank you," said Miss Greta, with her smile. But it was the look on Nan's face that struck Napier — a look that haunted him afterwards. If it had n't been absurd, he would have thought she was thanking him with all her soul; was *giving* him something. Something of unbelievable sweetness, "just because I stooped to pick up that woman's gloves!"

It was all in a flash. The next moment Nan stood buttoning up the coat she had so lately unbuttoned, and saying, "If you really must, I'm coming too!" — her eyes angry, her face ashamed. Miss von Schwarzenberg made no answer. Lady McIntyre was jerking out a succession of nervous questions which nobody took the trouble to notice.

"What we're coming to, *I* don't know." Sir William fumed and strutted up and down.

"Yes, Sir William." The servant stood there.

"Where's the *tea?*" Lady McIntyre in a sinking ship would have cried, "Where's the lifeboat?" with much the same accent and look of desperation.

"It's coming, m'lady. It's on the way up."

"Did n't I tell you five minutes ago"— the footman was catching it on the other side now — "you were to telephone for the car?"

"Yes, Sir William. It 's coming round now, Sir William."

"Come, then," Miss Greta said, as though Nan were the person desired by the police. "I 'm afraid I must carry you off."

"Oh, my dear!" Lady McIntyre rose with precipitation. Her work-bag rolled to the ground, but she did n't notice. Her blue eyes were on Greta's face a second, and then turned beseechingly on her husband.

"William!" She hurried over to him. "Surely, William, *you* —"

"Mere red-tape — mere red-tape, my dear," he said to his wife. "Though, if Lord Dacre was n't coming over at half-past six on official business — I 'd go with you," he said handsomely to Miss von Schwarzenberg. Miss von Schwarzenberg murmured politely in her veil that she would n't on any account have Sir William take so much trouble.

Lady McIntyre had jerked her head at Napier. But Napier seemed not to know his part in this scene. He stood silent, looking at the indignant face of Miss Greta's "little friend."

"It 's too dreadful to let you go without one of us!" Lady McIntyre wailed. "Shall *I* come, Greta dear?" And then, a good deal unstrung at the possibility of having her offer accepted: "N-not that I 'd be much good, I 'm afraid. I was never in a police station in my life."

"I don't imagine," said Miss Greta, with her fine mixture of tolerance and delicate contempt, "that any of us have been much in police stations."

Recollections of Lord Dacre had not brought entire re-

pose to Sir William. He twisted round in the comfortable chair:

"What do you say, Gavan? You won't mind representing me in this little — " he paused as the butler passed between them with a tray. A footman at his heels announced the car.

"Oh, she *can't* go without tea!" Lady McIntyre cried. Then with extreme felicity she added, "Why, before they hang people they give them tea!" Nan bit her lip.

The incomparable Greta smiled. "It does n't the least matter about tea, dear Lady McIntyre. And I 'd rather get to Newton Hackett before the po— the place shuts." The fraction of an instant her eyes rested on the servants, and then, as she went toward the door, "*So* good of you, so *kind* to let me have the motor!"

Miss Greta contrived, with economy of means beyond all praise, to give the expedition an air of being devised for her special convenience.

Sir William was plainly ruffled at Napier's obvious reluctance to accompany Miss Greta to Newton Hackett. Sir William was sorry it was such a bore. . . . If Colin or Neil had been at home, he would n't have had to ask anything so admittedly outside the range of a private secretary's functions. Presented like that, there was nothing for it but that Napier should, in Sir William's phrase, represent him in this little matter.

As the three were getting into the car, Madge leaned out of an upper window. "Well, I *do* think; sending me up here to wait for you! Where are you going?"

"Newton Hackett, dearest. Back soon." Miss Greta waved her handkerchief.

In a long bare room, a figure in uniform confronted them, on the other side of a table like a counter.

"Are you Inspector Adler?" Napier began.

Yes, the big fair man with a high color and heavy jowl was Inspector Adler.

"You were telephoned to, I believe?"

Yes, Inspector Smith had telephoned from Lamborough.

"Then you know all about this lady's errand." Napier stood aside for Miss Greta.

The interrogation went forward.

"Your surname is Sworsenberg?"

"No; von Schwarzenberg."

He seemed not greatly to like having his pronunciation corrected.

"Will you spell it?"

She spelt it.

"Your Christian name?"

"Johanna Marguerite."

"Please spell them."

She obliged.

"Where were you born?"

"At Ehrenheim."

"Will you spell it?" And when she had done so, he looked at the word with suspicion. "Where is it?"

"In Hanover."

"In Germany, you mean."

"In Hanover, Germany."

"In Germany." He put down the word about which already such a host of new connotations had begun to cling.

Nan lifted her eyes from the register to the man's face.

He was taking this business too seriously, with his "Germany, you mean," as if Greta had tried to pretend that Hanover was somewhere else.

"I 'm not English, either," said Miss Ellis in an explanatory tone.

"No?" The Inspector fixed her with his serious, blue eyes. "What are you?"

"American."

"Oh," he said, and lost interest.

"Now, Miss — a — Sworsenburger, what is the date of your birth?"

If Miss Greta hesitated a second, it seemed to be from a natural disgust at hearing her name murdered.

"Born 1886 — and the name is von Schwarzenberg." She must have been aware of the touch of hauteur in the tone of her correction, for instantly she changed it. "You, too,"— she smiled at the burly inspector —"you have a German name."

"*Me?*"

"Adler is one of the most com — usual names in Germany."

"My name 's not *Ah*dler. It 's Adler."

"That 's only a corruption," she said, less cautiously than was her wont.

"No corruption about it," he spoke roughly.

"She only means —" Napier began.

"Never 'eard in me life of a corrupt Adler. What 's your business over 'ere?"

"This lady," Napier intervened, "came into the family of Sir William and Lady McIntyre as a governess."

"She has become a valued personal friend," Miss Ellis

put in stiffly. "Have n't you heard that by telephone? You have only to ring up Sir William himself — "

"We are not supposed to take our information by telephone. How long do you want to stay in this country? "

"She lives here, as I 've told you," said Napier, "in the family of — "

The interrogatory went on, Nan more and more furious, appealing silently to Napier from time to time; Miss Greta taking it all with a dignity that made even Napier feel that he had never yet seen her to such advantage. The inspector, too, must in his way have felt that this foreigner who had accused him of being a German (*him,* James Adler, for the love of God!) and had accused the Adlers of being corrupted, was somehow getting the best of the interview. He was already accustomed (and the war was as yet counted by weeks) to seeing the few Germans who had presented themselves to be registered adopt an attitude either humorous (accompanied by offers of cigars), or uneasy, or tending toward the apologetic. Napier was sure that Adler lorded it a little even over people who knew how to treat an inspector proper.

"I don't see how you can stay here at all now they 've made this into a proscribed area," he said with a touch of pride at being inspector of a place so distinguished.

"Oh, so they have! " Miss Greta smiled. "I *ought* to have remembered, when Sir William took the trouble to see about a special permit." She opened a bag and took out a paper.

Inspector Adler looked at it with suspicion. Just this kind of case evidently had n't come his way before.

"Maybe it 's regular," he said cautiously as he handed

the paper back. "Better take care of it. You'll need it if you do stay and ever want permission to go outside the five-mile radius."

Miss Greta maintained a lofty silence.

"How does she get such a further permission?" said Napier.

"By applying to the proper authority," said Mr. Adler; "in this case to me." The inspector was dabbing some purple ink on a pad. "Now your finger-print, if you please."

Miss Greta drew back, scarlet. "A German is what I am, not a criminal."

"'Ere's where you go." He pointed downwards with a large, blunt thumb.

Napier in his embarrassment looked away from Miss Greta. His glance fell upon Nan. The girl's eyes had filled. "It's an outrage," she said in a choked voice. "*That* kind of identification is meant for rogues and murderers."

But Miss Greta had recovered herself. "And *that* sort of person," she said, "of course must object very much. But, after all, why *should* — people like us?"

Nan pressed close to Greta's side. "Yes, you must fingerprint me, too!" she said between pleading and command. "I'm every bit as much an alien as this lady."

"Not if you're an American. *She's* an enemy alien."

"She's *not* an enemy. You ought n't to say such things."

"Maybe you know what I ought to say better than the Gover'ment."

CHAPTER X

WHEN the ordeal at the police station came to an end, every person there was extremely on edge — except, you 'd say, Miss von Schwarzenberg. Her dignity under the ordeal would forever, Napier told himself, count in his mind to Miss Greta's credit. Going home, she soothed the ruffled spirits of Miss Nan; she was tender, reassuring; she smiled.

Before the party had left the dinner table that night, Julian Grant walked in. He had arrived late and put up at the Essex Arms.

"I shall complain to his mother about him when I see her," Lady McIntyre threatened. They all fell to congratulating Julian upon his parents' arrival in London. The fact of their belated and difficult return from Germany had been duly chronicled in the newspapers, together with hints of the unsuitable treatment to which Sir James and Lady Nicholson Grant had been subjected. But if, as was plainly the case, some of the Lamborough party waited eagerly to hear the horrid details, Julian seemed to have no mind to make the most of his opportunities.

"I suppose they told you all about it?" Sir William made no more effort than Madge to disguise his desire to know the worst.

"Oh, they told me one or two things. It 's been no

worse for them than for some of the foreigners over here," was the unfilial answer which Napier challenged on other grounds. Napier had the facts of the ill-treatment of English *Kurgäst* from the Foreign Office.

Julian lolled in his chair. People made a great deal of a little inconvenience, he said, especially the type of person who was a *Kurgäst*. It was a speech that did him no good in that company — being far too much like a reflection upon a highly esteemed pair of whom their son should speak with an even greater respect than the ordinary person.

Napier, who knew Julian's devotion to his parents, was morally certain that Lady McIntyre was thinking at that moment of those shining lights of filial duty, Mr. Carl and Mr. Ernst Pforzheim. *They* would never cast such a reflection upon their revered Papa as to suggest he was a little fussy about small comforts. No, it was n't nice of Julian.

So little did Julian recognize this, he was asking if anybody seriously thought inconvenience was avoidable in the vast upheaval of war? He only wished that inconvenience was the worst that any of them might have to complain of. A second time he tripped up those "Foreign Office facts" of Gavan's. Julian knew about those "facts." "And I know certain others. *They* relate to ill-treatment too. Facts more easily examined. No trouble about subjecting those facts to every sort of test! Why? Because they were nearer home. Yet I doubt if the Foreign Office makes any note of them. *I* have — in haphazard way. But enough to sober any man." He produced two or three. Instances of harsh dismissal at a time when fresh

employment was known to be impossible. Instances of boycott, of petty persecution, all because of a foreign name. It was the kind of attempt at sober balancing still possible even under the roof of a British official. A willingness as yet unshackled to see and to criticize these spots on the national sun, was accounted an attitude of mind peculiarly, proudly, British. If this particular circle was readier than most to admit these minor blames, it was largely because of sympathy with the particular German who was in their midst. A form of hospitality.

To Nan Ellis, Julian's espousal of the cause of the stranger within the gate was as music in the ear and as honey in the mouth. Good! good! She applauded him with hands and lips and eyes.

On leaving the dining-room, everybody began to put on hats and wraps.

"Oh, yes, had n't you heard, Mr. Julian? Fearful excitement! A mine has been washed up on the coast. And you, Madge," urged her father, who needed no urging whatever, "you 've got to come and look at it, too."

They all went down to the beach, and walked in the moonlight, by the incoming tide, a quarter of a mile north of the pier.

Miss Greta carried her coat on her arm at first. *Would* Mr. Napier be so kind? He stopped to help her into the voluminous white canvas ulster. "It is n't true, is it," she said in a low, earnest voice, "that you 've joined an O. T. C. and go drilling in the park after working hours?"

"Plenty of men do that," he said, struggling to enable Miss Greta to find the armhole.

"*Not men like you!*" she whispered. "And when you

are n't working with Sir William, you go route marching, or trench digging for a holiday!"

Napier had been one of the first of his world who refused to accept the fact of not being bred a soldier as an excuse for not becoming one. But that Miss Greta should be one of the few to know the fact did not please him. "Oh, the sleeve 's wrong side out," he said; "that 's why."

The ulster had to come off again. "Surely,"— she turned the sleeve with deliberation — "surely you know that before you are nearly ready for a commission, peace will be declared."

"You think peace will come soon, then?"

"Well, of course, when the Germans have taken Paris. There now —" she stopped short again, making of her compunction an excuse to widen the distance between themselves and the rest of the party. "I 've gone in my bungling way and said something I ought n't to. I, who would rather offend anybody on earth than you."

"I don't know why you should say that." He began to walk on.

"You don't know why?"

There was something unnerving in the appealing sorrow of the question. Why, in the name of all the gods, had n't he kept up with the others?

"I think you do know," she said, a pace or two behind his hurrying figure.

Napier did n't look round, but he was sure that the tears in her voice had risen to her eyes.

"Do you mind if I go on? I promised Julian —"

"Ah, you 've already gone on."

"Gone —" he paused an instant.

"Yes, gone back inside that British arctic circle that you came out of once — to save my life." She gained on him; she was panting at his elbow. "I shall never forget that, Mr. Gavan; never as long as I live."

"Oh, you make too much of —"

"Too much of saving such a life as mine! That may be true."

"You know!" — he swung back a step — "that was n't in the least what I meant. I — you see — I say! *Julian!*"

When Napier had caught up with the two in front, Miss Greta was n't far behind.

Nan turned an excited face. "Does Gavan know?" she asked Julian.

Just as though Greta were n't now at his elbow, Julian jerked out, "He can easily satisfy himself. Two hundred people on the Fourth of August simply vanished from our common life. No public charge, no trial that *was* a trial according to English ideas —"

"Would you leave known spies free to do their work?" Napier asked sharply.

"Do you know what happened to them?" Nan intervened.

"We can tell what happened to some of them. Set blindfolded against a wall and shot."

"How perfectly awful!" breathed Nan.

"Miss Greta is n't as horrified as you are. She knows what Germany would do with men — yes, and women — arrested on even slighter evidence."

"They 'd never do that to *women!*" said Nan, aghast.

"Oh, would n't they!"

"Set a *woman* against a wall and shoot her!"

"It's logical," was Miss Greta's comment.

"Logical!" echoed Nan. "It's — it's devilish."

"Risky but well paid," observed Napier, with his eyes on the rippled sand.

"It should be well paid," pronounced the quiet voice of Greta von Schwarzenberg. They had come up with Lady McIntyre, abandoned by the advance-guard. Nan offered her arm. She and Greta adapted their pace to the older woman's.

As the two men walked on, Julian spoke of the beauty of ships seen in that transfiguring light. "Only two or three little fishing-smacks, and yet the grace, the mystery —"

Napier's eyes had gone farther seaward. What were those other, vaguer shapes? Was there a mystery more urgent there? The night was unseasonably warm, but a chill invaded him as he asked, "Are they English?"

Julian, with his hands clasped behind him, strolled on without troubling to reply.

It was Napier who again broke silence.

"It's all very well to scoff at amateur detectives. Have you thought why *we* are on the coast?"

"Good air."

"And we breathe it just where we could so easily, if we were as accomplished as some, make signals and receive them."

Julian uttered the audible sigh of much-tried patience.

"Well, think a moment. Little as there is of proscribed area as yet, why are we in it? Because the McIntyres chose this place?"

"Certainly. Lady McIntyre told me herself about coming down to inspect — "

"Exactly! — a house selected for her. We are in the proscribed area because the enemy alien in the McIntyre family chose this place for them."

"I tell you, Gavan, I 'm not going to listen — "

"Yes, you are. I 've listened to you often enough. You can listen to me for once." He told him about the leakage of the shipping secret. The loss it had been to us. The gain it had been to the enemy. "Old Colonel McManus is right. She has poked her nose everywhere."

"All this makes me anxious," said Julian, gravely.

His friend breathed a free half-minute.

"Very anxious about *you,* Gavan."

"See here — " Napier stopped short — "because I was wrong about Gull Island is no reason — "

"So you 're satisfied you were wrong, are you?" Julian said lightly.

"Naturally, since you found nothing to report." Then it came out that Julian had had "more serious things" to think about. He had n't been near the Island. It was the first serious quarrel of their lives.

Napier left his friend and caught up with Sir William. The pressure on his mind did not suffer him to wait till he got his chief alone. When he had asked and obtained Sir William's reluctant consent "to a few days off," Napier broke through the little hail of questions, and commented with, "Is n't that the mine?"

"It is! It is!"

Madge flew on ahead, deaf to Lady McIntyre's, "Wait for your father, darling," — as though Sir William's pres-

ence might be trusted to exercise a mollifying effect upon the mine, a theory which, however, she was n't long in publicly abandoning.

Fifty yards or so this side of a rock-strewn indentation in the low coast-line there it lay, that strange, new creature of the deep, with nothing in its aspect to account for the instantaneous aversion it inspired in Lady McIntyre. Gray-white, shaped like a great egg or a pear, according to your angle of vision, seen at closer quarters it might be taken for a well-stuffed laundry-bag, except for the something odd protruding from its mouth. Lady McIntyre made no secret of her intention to give it a wide berth. As the others went toward the Thing, Lady McIntyre, left alone some yards away, called out, "I *wish* you would n't, William!"

"Would n't what?" he said good-humoredly over his shoulder. "I thought we had come for the express purpose of examining it."

"Yes, but I — I did n't know it would be like that."

"You can hardly have expected it to look more harmless," Sir William said as he went closer.

"That 's just it." Her wail said she would n't have minded it half so much had it been more frankly infernal. "Anyway, Madge must n't —" Then, with a rising terror in her voice, Lady McIntyre betrayed the degree to which she had lost her bearings at sight of that mysterious messenger of death. "William," she cried, "*make* Madge come away."

"It 's all right, my dear, as long as they are n't touched. This is the part, you see —"

As he appeared to be in the act of doing the very thing

he himself had said was likely to have dire results, Lady McIntyre raised her voice still higher. "Greta, do, *do* bring Madge here!"

Greta, enveloped in a canvas coat and gray-white motor-veil, was squatting by the enemy. She seemed to hear nothing, as she crouched there on the sand. The others listened to Sir William, and they, too, looked at the Thing, all except Napier. He looked at the huddled figure staring with that curious expression at the mine. It was canvas-covered like herself. Like herself, of rounded contour and of incalculable capacity for harm. It struck Napier rather horribly that there was kinship between the two, that she hung over the infernal thing like a mother might over her child.

"Mr. Napier," — Lady McIntyre's voice shrilled sharply behind him — "*will* you get Madge to come away?"

It was Nan who achieved the impossible. "Brr! I 'm cold," she announced. "If you were n't too grand, Mr. Napier, Madge and I would race you to those rocks."

Mr. Napier was n't too grand, and Miss Madge was elated by her victory. "I 'll race you back again," she cried, again off like the wind.

They sat down on the rocks where Madge left them. For several moments there was no sound but the swish and rattle of pebbles as they swept up shore in the advance, and then, deserted by the force behind, fell back a little, clinging for a moment to the skirts of the retreating wave.

Nan, with her white veil cloud-like round her face, looked at the track of light across the water. The moon wore a cloud round her face, too, but she looked in and out. The girl was very still.

"Oh, my dear! my dear!" Napier's heart cried so loud that in a kind of terror he fell upon audible speech. "It is the most wonderful night I ever —" and he stopped. His voice sounded strange. As she turned from the moon-path on the water to meet Napier's look fastened on her, he saw that her eyes had brought away some of the restlessness as well as some of the glitter of the sea. The adorable gentleness in them had given place to a critical, sharp, little glance that affected Napier like a breath from a glacier.

"Sir William seems immensely devoted to you —" To his over-sensitive ear she seemed to imply that being devoted to Gavan Napier implied a singular stretch of charity. Nor would she accept his silence. As though he must himself share this view of his scant deserts. "Don't you think it very nice of Sir William to let you go off on a holiday at such a time as this?"

"Very nice indeed."

She sat with her chin in her hand, her face upturned again. But the soft rapture was gone, gone utterly. "Julian is looking very tired, don't you think?" she said.

"I thought he did look tired."

"He is going to help Mr. Wilkins.

"Who is Mr. Wilkins?"

"Oh, Mr. Wilkins is a splendid person who is organizing stop-the-war meetings."

"Well," said Napier, shortly, "that's a good way to give Mr. Wilkins a taste of it."

"You mean a taste of war?" She dropped her hand. "Oh, I *wish* you would n't say things like that!"

"How I am making her hate me!" he said to himself. "Well, since she won't love me, what does it matter?"

But it did matter. It mattered to the very core of him. It mattered to the waking and the sleeping. It mattered for all of life — he knew that now. It would add a bitterness to the bitterness of death. To die never having had this —

She sat with hands lying slack in her lap. "I think I'd like to go home," she said. "I don't like England as much as I did."

"Why is that?"

She looked at him oddly and then away. After another little silence, "Well, for one thing, I think it's abominable the way they are talking and writing about the men who didn't approve of the war and were brave enough to say so, and say it publicly." She turned her eyes from the curling, crisping foam as if to plead for some little sympathy for these views. There was no sign on Napier's face. She thrust her iron-pointed stick into the sand. "What they've given up, some of those men, for the sake of — oh, it's the most splendid thing I ever came near to! I *love* those men."

"All of them?" Napier asked drily.

She sprang up. "I won't have you mocking at me. Or at Julian!"

"I don't mock at Julian."

"Oh, only at me?" She laughed a little uncertainly and then became grave again, but not, Napier felt, unfriendly. "You know, his father has gone home to Scotland. His mother, too. And Julian is here." They

were silent a moment. "And I just wish they'd stayed in Germany," she burst out. "They are horrid to Julian. They've as good as told him they're ashamed of him. But they don't deserve to have a son like Julian. If he was *my* son . . ."

Napier smiled. "Well, if he were your son?"

"I'd know how to treat him. I'd know rather better than I do now," she wound up, with her astonishing candor.

Hardly two yards away the inrushing surf foamed as white as boiling milk among the boulders.

"How long," she asked, with something breathless in her manner, "before the tide reaches as far as where we are?"

"Not long." Even as he spoke, one of those waves that will sometimes outrace its fellows rushed up the beach and flung itself in thunder against the outward barrier. In spume and froth it ran whitely in and out nearly to the upper rocks, filling all the place with motion and a dazzle of moonlit foam.

"It seems to set the rocks moving. And the noise! Does n't it make you dizzy?" she said. "It does me."

"Then come higher up."

She shook her head. He showed a place at his side. "Sit here if you feel —"

"Oh, but I *like* to feel dizzy. That's the great difference between you and me," Her laugh was gone in a second. With her eye on the receding wave she asked hurriedly, "Where are you going for your holiday?"

His plans were dependent on other people, he said.

"You make me wonder what 'other people' you've got.

How little I know about you." She tumbled the sentences out.

"Well, come to that, how little I know about you."

"There is n't anything I 'm not willing to tell you — if — if you cared to know." She spoke more gently, even with a touch of wistfulness. "You British are so reticent!" He did n't deny the charge. He felt her eyes on his face, as she said, "I have an idea you would n't be — if you once got started."

He laughed out again at that shot. "The only safe way then," he said, "is not to get started."

"Oh, *do* get started!" She said it with a touch of roguery lightening her new seriousness. "I should so like to see you indiscreet for once."

Deliberately Napier did n't look at her again, till the danger-point was safely rounded by her saying, "Greta thinks you 're going to Scotland."

"Oh, *does* she?" He looked at her straight enough now. "And does she tell you why?"

"No; but you 'll tell me that."

"Maybe I will," he answered a trifle grimly, "when I come back."

She studied him. "You are very serious." She leaned a trifle nearer. "You are more serious, I think, than I ever saw you."

Napier smiled. In his heart he was thinking: "Before she is up in the morning, I shall be gone. On the errand that will end even her surface kindness to Greta's enemy. This is the last time. She will never again stand so near and look at me with those eyes of faith."

"Are n't you rather serious, too?" he asked.

She spoke through his question, impulsively, lifting her voice a little above the nearing thunder. "Lady McIntyre thinks you are going to see a lady."

He made his small effort at jocularity. "I must speak to Lady McIntyre."

"*Are* you such a fickle person?"

"Is that what they say?"

"They think you are fickle about women."

"Well," he said, achieving an effect of jauntiness, "and what's your opinion, Miss Nan?"

"They don't understand you," she said gravely.

"And do *you* understand me?" he laughed.

"Yes. Because I'm like that myself. They call me fickle, too. But it's only that we have n't — *had n't*" — she amended with that sudden summer lightning in her eyes —"had n't met The One." If she came closer still, it seemed not to be by her own volition, but in the same way as she had spoken — at the bidding of some influence outside them both. Napier half turned from the too-disturbing nearness and instinctively put out a hand to the boulder, shoulder-high, just in front of him. But his hand moved short of its goal, unguided by a mind that was awhirl in a maelstrom where duties, inclinations, friendships, loves, all churned in an eddy of such surpassing swiftness that the brain reeled and the heart forgot its rhythm.

"Always thinking — but why does your hand shake so?" — the girl's voice was so low, that he hardly heard it above the surf, as she hurried on. "Maybe it's this one. No? Then perhaps it's that. And always wrong — till one day — in the hall —" a very passion of triumph

thrilled through her question, "Was n't it in the hall at Kirklamont?"

"*Nan!*" he cried out.

And she, on a note that the surf took up and carried out to sea, cried, "Gavan!" On whose initiative neither knew, they were clinging together. They cared as little for sea water as did the rocks. The two stood there like one — as if through all the moons to come they would bide as steadfast in their rapture as the rocks in foam.

When she drew her face away from his, and they looked at each other, it was with the knowledge that the wash of a greater sea than this they stood beside had flung them, companion castaways, on the shore of a new world.

She had thrown back her head. The scarf fell down over her shoulder to her feet, a tiny cascade to join the whiteness of sea water. All veils had been stripped off for that moment of uttermost joy, before the man cried sharply, "Julian!" and his arms fell down to his sides.

"*Julian!*" the girl echoed, aghast. She stumbled back a step. He did n't try to save her. She fell against the rock. Her hand, that tried to break the fall, was wrenched at the wrist. She hardly knew it at the time.

"Come, let us go back." He was leading her through swirling foam.

"How can we go back?" she whispered. But she followed him. They found the others waiting for them by the pier.

CHAPTER XI

IT was not such dirty weather as McClintock the boatman had prophesied. Though the night was dark and the sky mantled in heavy cloud, the rain was hardly more than a Scotch mist. That is to say, it was no rain at all in the terms of the North. On the mainland the temperature was mild to mugginess. But once away and under full sail, a decent little breeze carried the boat smartly over the long rollers.

Napier had taken his place at the tiller. Half-way to the objective, which had not yet been named, he added to the sense of the importance of the expedition by proposing to double McClintock's fee as some compensation for doing without his pipe for an hour or two after landing.

Napier anticipated a tussle over this point. McClintock's grunt might mean anything from pig-headed refusal to whole-hearted agreement.

"Naturally," Napier went on, with an air of being a deal more easy than he felt, "when I wanted to overhaul Gull Island, I thought of the man who took Julian and me there when we were boys."

"Gairrmans!" remarked McClintock, careful to abstain from the rising inflection.

"What! Have you seen something?"

"Na, na; but I have na lookit." He took the pipe out

of his mouth and knocked the ashes into the sea. "They 'll be verra gude at smellin' oot." It was so he indorsed Napier's generalship, and accepted service.

The only notice taken of the observation seemed to hint at a further acuteness for McClintock to reckon with. "I 'll tell you the plan in two words," Napier said, "and then we 'd best not be talking for the next couple of hours." When he 'd landed Napier, McClintock was to lie low in his boat, just offshore, for about an hour and a half, unless one of two things happened. If McClintock should see a light on the rocks at the top of the gorge, he might, if he liked, come and see what was up, but if he should hear a pistol-shot, whatever length of time he 'd been left alone, he was to wait half an hour longer. If, by then, Napier had neither appeared nor shown a light, McClintock was to get along back to Kirklamont and raise the hue and cry — an extremity, he was to understand, which Napier particularly desired to avoid. And that was why he was going by himself, going with extreme caution, just to establish the fact that there was no reason why they should n't come back by daylight safely enough and go over the old ground together. For a last word, Napier remarked that he had n't forgotten McClintock had taught him and Julian more than fishing and sailing, and here was a pistol he 'd best keep handy.

The old man slipped the weapon into the pocket of his reefer as casually as though it had been another pipe. But he remarked that he was more at home in these days with a knife, whether for oysters "or whatever." There was no doubt that McClintock was not only enlisted, but interested at last.

He brought his boat softly up on the spit of sand left by the tide, sole landing-place of this nature on all the little rockbound coast. The only sounds abroad were the shrill *keep, keep,* of the sea-pie, and a swish of wings out of the cliff.

Without a word being exchanged, Napier went over the side, through a shallow ripple to the little beach, so narrow as to be hardly more than a window of gravel at the foot of the cliff. In a sense this was an advantage once he was piloted safely to the sand spit. He remembered he had only to hug the cliff till he came to that place — scene of many a wreck, where the cliff fell sharply in a chaos of boulders tumbling out to sea. By bearing inland, Napier would cross at its narrowest the neck of what he used to think looked like the wreckage of a pier. Quite suddenly he would come into a gentler region, a gradual acclivity that led through willow and heather and bracken up to the apex of the height which, midmost of the island, commanded all points of the compass. If there was an installation, it would be there masked from the mainland, among the rocks at the top of the gorge. And if the installation was there, Napier would find it, provided somebody did not first find him.

The night was warm for September, but till he landed, the wet breeze had struck cold. Here, on the island, summer seemed to linger. The air was still full of the sun-quickened scent of pines. The sweetness of thyme was stronger than the faint bitter of bracken. But these things reached Napier vaguely. Those admirable servants, his eyes, were well used by now to this half-darkness; but they could do little for him in comparison with the two

other allies, his hearing and the quickened power of the humblest faculty of all. As he felt his way with foot and shoulder, the new significance in contact seemed to extend from living flesh and nerve to the rattan stick he carried. The soft alternate strokes, now right, now left advised him of the gorse clumps, of a solitary stone-pine, or an occasional rock half submerged in coarse grass and heather. Every few yards he stopped to listen. Yet he got over the ground with a quickness that brought him a jolt of surprise when, the ascent grown suddenly steeper and less verdured, he found himself near the top of the hangar. He had reached the place where the bony shoulders of the island rose naked above her mantle of green and heather-purple.

Though he could see virtually nothing of the wide prospect daylight opened out from this point, he was too well aware of the prodigies of vision possible to trained eyes for him to risk showing any faintest shadow moving on the sky-line. Before he came to the top he was making his progress bent nearly double; crouching to listen, and then creeping along on hands and knees.

The comparatively uniform surfaces of the mother-rock showed no sign yet of dropping down to chaos. But Napier knew where he was. The tinkle of water told him. In two minutes he was craning over the lip of the gorge, staring into the murk beneath him.

A mere gulf of shadow.

No man in his senses would venture farther on a night like this, unless he had in his memory one of those indelible maps that only youth knows the secret of engraving. It was such a map that Napier turned back to as he lay

there in the dark, getting not only the detail, but the order, clear again in his head.

The remembered call of the water came up insistent. Almost Napier could imagine that he made it out, that nook, a few yards below, which had always been the boys' first stopping-place. In the driest summer a thread of pure fresh water trickled out of a fissure in the granite down there among the ferns. In spring the trickle would swell to a torrent. It would go boiling over the worn boulders till it plunged down that last lap in noise and foam into the tiny lake, the small rock basin of steel-blue water, smiling in the sunshine of memory, but even in that light set warningly about with nearly perpendicular walls on three sides. On this southern arc, more terribly furnished still, with rocks of sharper tooth, calved later from the mother in labor of heat and frost.

After quenching their thirst, the boys' next stopping-place would be Table Rock, a third of the way to the bottom. There they would lie stretched out to the sun and eat their sandwiches. Then they would crawl to the far edge and peer over for that dizzy view of the great boss, the outcrop of granite eighteen to twenty feet below them on the left. By virtue of place or special constitution, it had possessed a power to resist the forces of disintegration. It treated the very torrent cavalierly, for it butted the torrent aside with that Giant's Head, and then bent leisurely over to look at itself in the lake.

There were days when the jutting forehead, with its crown of heather and veil of creepers interlaced, was seen more clearly mirrored in the water than when looked straight down upon from Table Rock or from the op-

posite cliff across the lake. Neither point of view gave one the smallest inkling of what was under the veil, behind the brow of granite.

Napier sniffed the wet air for smoldering wood. No whiff, no sound.

What the devil had been in Greta's mind? The cause of her panic, whatever it was, no longer inhabited here. Napier would feel his way down as quickly as due caution would permit, and in less than forty minutes he'd be back in the boat with McClintock.

All he had to do was to steer clear of Table Rock and follow the watercourse till it bore away to the left. Any one who knew his ground and kept to the right could easily enough let himself down to that comfortable ledge under the Giant's Head. Sometimes you found bilberries there. Anyway, you found the niche that sheltered you from rain. And then you went on to the discovery that took your breath.

In the old days you waited for McClintock with beating hearts, even if there were two of you. Gavan eight and Julian seven, would follow behind the old sou'wester to the end of the curving gallery, where a drop of some four feet landed you in the irregular-shaped stone chamber where the smugglers long ago had hid the contraband. How did they get it round the Giant's Head? you asked, remembering the narrow way. They did n't get it round. They lowered it over the top. McClintock could show you the grooves worn in the granite. Good days, those!

Wet and a little chilled, but without misgiving, Napier let himself down among the rocks. He began the descent with a swing of the rattan to take his immediate bearings.

Before he brought the stick full circle, he dropped the hand that held it. What was this against the side of his knee? He bent down and found his face a few inches from a steel cable, screwed taut, and straining aslant skyward. His eye followed the outline of the twisted strand till it met a slender rod planted discreetly among the rocks. Planted so discreetly that it was completely masked from observation on three points of the compass and would not easily be detected on the fourth. Napier could not make out the wire connecting the farther one of the antennæ onto this one above his head; but he knew that it was there. He knew that he had set his knee against one of the guys of a wireless. He moved only a couple of inches away from that significant companionship and stood quite still.

Was this installation a prewar dodge, abandoned now? And if not abandoned —

He found himself making his way down with his right hand in his pistol-pocket. Gull Island was another place with that wand of magic set up among the rocks.

He started as violently as if a gun had gone off. Only the vicious snapping of a dry twig under foot; but, Lord, the racket! His caution redoubled.

With horror he remembered that old pastime — rolling the rocks down. How they bounded and crashed! Across the years he heard again the reverberant thunder of that long falling. What if he should displace one of these. . . . He drew his foot back, trembling from head to heel at the slight rocking of a boulder. Could he venture down in this darkness?

Was n't, after all, the darkness an indispensable part of

his plan? He stood and listened. Behind the sound of falling water there was nothing, not even a bird's note. The stillness was piercing. Under its penetrant impact he shrank inwardly.

What was that?

Something had sprung out of the shadow. Lord! Nothing but an infernal rabbit; and the damned fool had dislodged a few little stones.

Napier sat crouching in the gorge a good four or five minutes after the last of that pop-popping died. He had pulled off his cap and thrust it into his pocket. He wiped his forehead. Whew! nothing but a damned rabbit!

He listened an instant, and then went on down in the murk and the fine rain. Suddenly he stood still again. There was n't a sound his ear could verify. But he held his breath, while horror moved like a wind in his hair.

He was n't alone.

How he knew, he could n't have told. He plunged his hand into his revolver pocket, braced himself, and waited. Waited while the seconds passed. Waited till that first strong impression weakened, till he had silently called himself a few unpleasant names, and had drawn out of his pocket the cap he told himself his addled pate needed more than the protection of firearms. He went on in the act of settling the cap firmly on his head. He had heard nothing, seen nothing, when a blow on the back all but felled him. He saved himself from falling flat only by plunging a few paces down the gorge. He managed to recover, and wheeled about, his hand at his pocket. Before he could get at his pistol, that hand and the other arm were seized in a powerful grip. His hobnailed boot did him the in-

stant service of bringing his assailant down on one knee. But Napier was dragged along with him in those arms of iron. It flashed over Napier that the aim of this dumb enemy was not so much to kill as to disarm him.

It was a battle for a pistol. The conviction grew in Napier's mind that he would already be lying dead there among the rocks but for the man's strange caution. He did n't want that pistol to go off; and so they wrestled in a nightmare of blind silence. Now one, and now the other, regained his footing and then lost it; and now they both went rolling down together till the rocks stopped them. And still no word was spoken.

Twice Napier had his fingers almost on the trigger, and twice his hand was wrenched away. The last time a thick voice whispered, "*Drop* it! Don't you know you 're a dead man if you make a sound?" The voice of Bloom, Sir William's chauffeur! He had got Napier down again; the full weight of the assailant's body was on Napier's head; his left arm pinned under him. In that strangling darkness Napier told himself the end had come. He was dead already. Why was he resisting? He knew why, when he felt Bloom's teeth on his right forearm. He felt the pistol go from his bruised side. He heard the drop among the scant herbage of the rocks.

It was over. Resistance had been battered out of him. He was quite sure of that. Why did n't Bloom let him alone? Why was the fellow dragging him down?

It suddenly occurred to him that they could n't be far from Table Rock. *Bloom was going to throw him over!*

He had loosed his hold on Napier's shoulder. Breathing heavily, he had come round and straddled across his vic-

tim's body. He fastened his hands in Napier's torn collar, pulled him up into a sitting posture, and dashed his head against a boulder. Not quite squarely, for Bloom's foot had slipped on the wet moss. He braced himself and took fresh hold. In that second the impotence passed out of Napier's body. His sinews hardened as he locked his maimed arms round the man. Before Bloom could recover from the disadvantage of his stooping posture, Napier, in a spasm of dying energy, had rolled with the chauffeur in his arms toward the edge of Table Rock. More angry than frightened by the suddenness of Napier's recovery, Bloom was striking wild.

"He does n't know where he is!" Napier said to himself with exultation. In a very convulsion of insane strength he gripped the panting body of the German and flung it out over the edge of Table Rock.

He hung there listening.

But the blood flowed into his ears as well as into his eyes. No sound reached him. He tried to crawl back toward the stream. On the way unconsciousness, like an angel out of heaven, came down and covered him.

In spite of the tribute to McClintock's being able to do what he was told, the old man had no mind to go home at the end of the time stipulated without knowing something of what was keeping Mr. Gavan. And so, some three quarters of an hour after that body had shot out into the void, the fisherman, picking his way cannily down the gorge, slipped on something soft. His questing hands felt blood, new spilt. A match, lit in his sou'wester and instantly smothered, showed him enough. He drew back

behind a rock and waited there several minutes, listening. When he got back to Napier, he had the sou'wester half full of water. He sprinkled it over Napier's face. He poured whisky down his throat. Aye, that was better. Napier was presently able to say that a man who attacked him had been thrown over Table Rock. The question was, could McClintock get Napier back to the boat?

Oh, aye, McClintock could do that same. But Mr. Gavan had best bide there a little longer; and here was the whiskey-flask to keep him company.

Napier sent a whisper of remonstrance after him as the foolhardy old man went down the gorge. Too well Napier knew where McClintock would be going. And he had n't warned him! Poor old McClintock! Napier lay there a few minutes, and then crawled to the water. He bathed his head and drank some more whiskey. He tried to stand but could n't manage that, and went on hands and knees. He had no clear idea what he was doing. But McClintock was fumbling his way down there without a notion of the risk he ran.

Presently Napier found he could stand, after a fashion. So he staggered on till the stream turned to the left, and Napier, to the right, was making his way round the Giant's Head down to the ledge beneath.

"McClintock!" he whispered, and steadied himself against the rock wall to listen. McClintock must have gone in! Napier had no consciousness of making any decision. He merely found himself feeling the way along an inward-curving gallery when the pitch blackness in front of him opened on a wedge of light, fierce, intolerable. As suddenly, the light was gone.

If he had been quite clear in his head, Napier declared afterward, he would have prudently retraced his steps.

As it was, a sense of blind compulsion was on him. For in that dazzling instant he 'd had a glimpse of McClintock. Poor old McClintock, whom Napier had inveigled into this trap; McClintock, his heavy shoulder, his sou'wester, and a bristle of beard stamped for an instant on that blinding, impossible light. Streaks of it still leaked through the blackness. Napier's outstretched hand came almost at once against something soft, yielding. A double-felted curtain. He grasped it and stared through, to find himself standing at the top of a carpeted incline, looking down into a luxurious room, flooded with high-power, electric light. In the glare McClintock, with a knife in his hand, stood not ten feet from a man in shirt-sleeves seated at a table. The back of the seated figure was turned partly away from the entrance; his head bent; a green shade over his eyes. He was taking down a message. A metal band over his crown, ear-caps set close to his head, held him oblivious to all sound save that which the mysterious forces of nature were ticking into his ears.

Not McClintock's wary approach, but Napier's less cautious movement of the felted curtain, or some cooler air current penetrating the overheated chamber, was responsible for that slight turn of the harnessed head. It was Carl Pforzheim! His cry died on his lips as he tore off the shade. But he could n't in that lightning instant wrench himself free of the apparatus, for the cord had become wound round his neck. He presented a sickening impression of one struggling in a man-trap, showing, as a wild animal might, a flash of bared teeth as he strained

out across the table and seized a revolver. The shot went wild. For he had turned to face the descent of McClintock's knife. Pforzheim fell sidewise against the pink wall of petrol tins, still hung up by his *apparat,* and dribbling scarlet over the pink.

They spent the night with the dead body.

There were two good beds, but only one was slept in. McClintock mounted guard. In the morning he went out and found the body of Sir William's chauffeur. He buried him with Pforzheim.

The den was stocked with supplies, wine, cigars, food, books, cards. There were very few papers, but they were worth coming for.

CHAPTER XII

ANTWERP, in flames from incendiary bombs, had fallen to the Germans, and hot fighting was in progress between Arras and Albert and from Laon to Rheims when Napier, not yet recovered from his shooting accident, returned from Scotland in October.

At his chambers in St. James' he was told that an urgent message had come for him from Lamborough. Would he please say nothing about it to Sir William, who must not be alarmed, but very particularly would he please ring up Lady McIntyre the moment he got back.

Before he opened a letter, or even took off his hat, he was listening to the agitated voice at the other end of the wire. It begged him to get a car and motor out instantly to Lamborough. "Without telling anybody, *anybody at all,*" that he was coming.

"I hope nothing has happened to Sir William."

Sir William was all right, and he was n't to know.

"Bad news from the front, is it?" he said with that already familiar turn of thought to the unintermitting tragedy across the Channel.

"No, no. Jim was all right. Colin and Neil, too." The distracted voice assured him, nevertheless, Mr. Gavan was urgently, cruelly needed at Lamborough.

"Tell me if anybody is hurt," he said with sudden horror upon him.

"N— not yet," came back the astonishing answer.

Everything depended upon his getting there in time.

All the way he tortured himself with pictures of Nan in some fearful trouble. By whom else at Lamborough could he, Gavan Napier, be "cruelly needed"?

He remembered Julian's speech about her that day of her arrival. "Did you ever see such faith in any pair of eyes? It's pathetic, a person like that. Think of the knocks she'll get."

He cursed the slowness of the car that was going fifty miles an hour.

"Nan! Nan! I'm coming!"

For the hundredth time he lived over those minutes among the rocks; that lightning stroke in the blood; the astonishment of the two victims; the shame; the silent, shared, effort at retrieval. Hardly two sentences had been exchanged between them afterward. Yet there had been no conscious abstention from the luxury of speech. A bewilderment possessed them, an aching too anguished not to be dumb.

He had gone away early the next morning without seeing her again. He had not written.

There was no sign of Nan or of any one else, as Napier drove up to the house toward four o'clock that afternoon. The quickening of his pulses on the way to the drawing-room seemed to say, "She is here." But the room was empty. All the house was strangely still, in that brief interval before word came down. Would Mr. Napier come up to Lady McIntyre's sitting room?

"Oh, Mr. Gavan!" As though she were the last survivor of some huge disaster, a woeful, haggard little lady

came forward to greet him. "I thought you'd never get here. It has been the most dreadful time." She dropped among her sofa cushions, speechless for a moment. "Even up there in Scotland," tacitly she reproached him, "you've heard, I suppose, of the length this spy mania has gone. *Everybody* with a foreign name is suspected. Any one who protests, even the most trusted official — openly insulted — "

"Oh, really, Lady McIntyre," — he tried to enfold the poor little lady in his own reassurance. "I have n't heard anything to suggest — "

"Then you've forgotten how we lost our dear good Bloom. That was bad enough. But what has worried William a great deal more are the questions, though they are asked only in private — 'as yet only in private,' William says," — Lady McIntyre clasped her thin hands — "questions about Greta. William has been splendid, so has Julian. We have all tried to make it — " The delicate face crumpled suddenly. It seemed to shrivel as the picture of a face might at the touch of fire. The touch of trouble — consolidator of the strong, disintegrator of the weak — had found out Lady McIntyre in her safe and sheltered place in the world. She turned away the quivering little visage and went on: "There have been letters. Odious anonymous letters," — she brought her eyes back to Napier again, the eyes of a hurt child — "about Greta! Poor William had been getting *horrid* letters for a fortnight. He never said a word about them till the wretches began to write to me. And the neighbors — no, you can't think what we've been through!" The relief of tears eased the strain.

"The Scotland Yard people — I've only known that since Sunday week — they'd already been to William. With absolutely nothing that could be called proof. 'Suspicious circumstances'—'a girl going out to meet her lover under the rose.' She told William she was going to marry him — Ernst; yes. *I* liked Carl best — such nice teeth. But anyway — William — they little knew, those Scotland Yard people."

From confused fragments of overcolored speech, Napier gathered that the growing epidemic of fear and detestation had only stiffened his chief's determination to protect the stranger within his gate.

"You would n't have called William a patient man, now, would you? Well, you ought to have heard how he explained, argued, said all the right things. You might as well suspect my daughter of being the wrong sort of person to live under my roof. The lady in question is one of us. I *vouch* for Miss von Schwarzenberg."

Even the child — even Meggy — came to know that people looked askance at her for having Greta at her side!

Even Meggy! Napier was ready to swear that "the child" was, after Miss Greta herself, by far the best-informed person in the house. She was, anyway, according to her mother, the most indignant. Meggy had made common cause with Nan Ellis and Mr. Grant in ridiculing and condemning the popular superstition that every German must needs be an enemy of England. Napier heard how those three had redoubled their watchful friendship, a self-constituted bodyguard to keep Miss Greta safe from any breath of discourtesy, from so much as a glance of unworthy suspicion.

A momentary comfort derived from the thought of these champions suddenly failed Lady McIntyre. The smoothness of her face was broken again, as, again on the brink of tears, she remembered the villain of the piece. "The local inspector — that creature who made Greta go to Newton Hackett without any tea — he came again. Simply would n't go till William had seen him. I have n't often known William so angry. I am afraid he was rude to the man. It never does to be rude to these people. I 've tried being kind to him. I," — the tear-faded eyes lifted with a look of conscious virtue — "I gave him all William's best cigars. And *still* he has n't given us a moment's peace. Of course William flatly refused to send Greta away. 'Not all the inspectors in England —'" Lady McIntyre stiffened her slight back a moment with borrowed resolution. Only for a moment. The next saw her wavering forward with: "Then two men came down from London to see *me!* Oh, Mr. Gavan," — she writhed her locked fingers —"they won't go!"

"Won't go?"

She shook her ear-rings, speechless a moment. Then in a whisper: *"At the inn,* since yesterday. What do you think of *that?"*

All that Napier thought was Nan! Nan! How much does she know? And how is she taking it?

"They must have found out I 'd gone to give Boris and Ivan a run on the sands. Greta and the rest were up on the sea-wall. They never *dreamed* that those two dreadful young men, standing there as if they were friends, pretending to admire the boar-hounds, were secret service people, sent down by the Intelligence Department. And

what they were really saying — at least the one who does the talking! I was thinking only last night while Julia was brushing my hair — things often come to me like that — I suddenly remembered that I could n't — not if I was to be hanged for it — I could n't remember a syllable the fat young man had uttered. It 's my belief he 's a deaf mute. Well, the other one said, if something was n't done *at once,* if I did n't use my great influence with my husband to have the German lady sent out of England, there would be a scandal. Everybody would say we had harbored a suspect after we 'd been warned. And when he saw I was n't going to do what he wanted, what do you think he called Greta? A spy, who handed on official information to the enemies of the country! Things have got out that they blame poor Greta for. Oh, is n't it an *awful* penalty to pay for her loyalty in sticking to us as she 's done through thick and thin!

"Well, these secret service men — one *very* worrying thing about them: *I* don't know how to treat such people; they *seem* to be quite superior to their disgusting work — well, they pretend that for her sake, for Greta's, I ought — Heavens above! here they are again!" Lady McIntyre collapsed against her cushions, breathing heavily and staring fascinated at the door opposite the one by which Napier had come in. Napier, too, could hear them now — those footsteps.

The knock on the door must have been expected and could n't have been more discreet, yet at the sound Lady McIntyre lost her head. Instead of saying, "Come in!" she remarked in a smothered undertone, "I told McAndrews to bring them up the back stairs."

The door opened. "Mr. Singleton, Mr. Grindley, m'lady."

Two young men came in. Well groomed, wearing well-creased trousers, holding their hats and walking-sticks. Singleton, taller, a year or two the older, was a well-set-up person, with dark mustache, and frank, hazel eyes. "Where have I seen the fellow?" Napier asked himself, reading recognition in the guarded smile. They both greeted the lady.

"*Is n't,* after all!" Lady McIntyre jerked out in a confidential aside to Napier, upon the supposed deaf-mute's audible salutation. Neither was Mr. Grindley so very fat either, merely inclined to stoutness. Fair, slow, slightly bored; his prominent, gray-green eyes seemed gently to seek vacuity. Whether dullard or dreamer, this was certainly the last person you would pick out of a crowd for the errand on which he had come. This plump young man looked at ease, for the reason that he did n't care, or had forgotten where he was; the other one seemed to be at ease because he had never, in any place, been anything else. During the pause, which Lady McIntyre found agitating, Mr. Singleton stood there a step in advance of his companion, the hands that held his hat, with gloves tucked in the brim, crossed on the knob of his walking-stick. And suddenly Napier remembered. This frank-looking young man with the long chin had been sent down from Oxford in Napier's first year. He had done what he could to shield the culprit, though they had never been friends.

Napier was the first to move, after McAndrews had shut the door behind him. It was not mere restlessness on Napier's part, nor detestation of the business these fellows

had come about. He felt he must go and look out into the front hall. If Nan were to come in suddenly —

There was no one. Napier leaned against the wall, standing where, through the door ajar, he could command the stairs.

"We heard," — Singleton in his cheerful, cultivated tones was saying to Lady McIntyre — "we heard the gentleman you were waiting for had arrived."

"Yes, but I — I have n't yet had time to explain." That poor head, which Lady McIntyre had jerked to Singleton, she jerked now to Napier. "They want me," she told him, "to search Greta's things. What do you think of *that?*" As Napier did n't at once say what he thought of it, Lady McIntyre flung out, "While she 's away!"

Instead of denouncing such a demand, Napier asked, "Where is she?"

"Oh, they 've gone off to see some old church, or something, on the coast."

"You don't know where?"

She shook her head. "How *can* I remember all the places they go to? A fresh one every day."

"Has — a —" Napier caught his tongue back from articulating "Nan." "They 've *all* gone?"

"Yes; and they may be back any moment."

Napier seemed to read in the easy confidence in Mr. Singleton's eyes that he personally did not look for the immediate return of the party. But it occurred to Napier that "the party" meant, to the secret service men, only Greta von Schwarzenberg. It seemed quite possible to Napier's own fears that, by some perverse stroke, Nan

Ellis might return alone. She might even at the last moment — Fate did play these tricks — have fallen out of the party. In one of the rooms overhead she might be meditating descent. How else could he account for that all-pervading sense of her presence which filled the house? And he was the only one who knew how much, how infinitely, worse it would be if Nan were to come in and find them — He glanced sharply through the crack of the door.

"I have been explaining," — Mr. Singleton seemed to invite Mr. Napier's coöperation — "since Lady McIntyre is so sure the view held by the Intelligence Department is mistaken, that it's a kindness to the young lady to embrace this opportunity to clear the matter up."

"Imagine the shabbiness of such conduct!" Lady McIntyre appealed to the figure listening by the door. "I am to take advantage of her absence to rummage among her —"

"No, no," Mr. Singleton protested. "You take advantage of the one and only chance of proving her innocent without hurting her feelings. It can either be done quietly without the least scandal, or be done with a publicity much less considerate. *I* should say, if the lady were a friend of mine —"

"Yes, I've heard your view," said Lady McIntyre, with nervous asperity. "It is Mr. Napier's I have waited for. Can you," — she stood up wavering, miserable — "can you see me giving permission to a strange man and his confederate" — she jerked a glance toward the silent, absent-minded individual at Singleton's side —"to break open Miss von Schwarzenberg's trunk and —"

Mr. Singleton, wholly unperturbed, assured Lady McIntyre there need be no breaking open. He had, as she said, "most fortunately, a —" — Mr. Singleton smiled pleasantly — "an assistant who was in his way a genius at avoidance of breakage or any sort of violence."

The fastidiousness with which he repudiated "any sort of violence" plainly gave Lady McIntyre pause. Even in the thick of a thousand agitations it was noticeable how great a part was played in the persuading of the lady by the voice and manner of the agent, particularly by the voice. Its natural timbre, its accent, its curve and fall, all connoted the moral decencies, as well as the external fitness and refinements, of good breeding. If you suspected this man of baseness, you simply gave away your own unworthy thoughts. The reticent dignity with which he uttered the phrase, "for the sake of the safety of the country," that of itself seemed to range him on the side of defenders in the field.

Helplessly, Lady McIntyre waited upon the guidance she had sent for.

"Have you had official warning of this visit?" Napier asked her.

"No."

"There are reasons," Mr. Singleton reminded him, "as you must see, why a warning would defeat the purpose of the visit."

"You have a warrant for this search?"

He had. He produced it. An order under the Official Secrets' Act. "If a mistake has been made, Mr. Grindley and I," he said, as he returned the document to his inside pocket, "can assure ourselves of the fact and be out of

the house in half an hour. Unless Lady McIntyre should, unhappily, be too long in making up her mind," — he glanced at the clock on the mantel-piece — "neither the German lady nor any one outside this room and the Intelligence Department will ever know of the investigation. Is n't that better than the alternative? — having it conducted in public?"

The bribe was great, yet great was poor Lady McIntyre's misgiving. Men of another class would have stood no chance of overcoming her scruples. Oh, the Intelligence Department was not so blundering as some would have us believe, since upon a presumably very minor case it could expend this patience and finesse.

Lady McIntyre fluttered to the guarded door. "I could n't let them do it with no one here." She clung an instant to Napier's arm.

He and Singleton glanced up and down corridor and stair, as the three men followed Lady McIntyre's lead into a room at the end of a passage.

The first thing noticeable about the little room was its air of distinction, bred only in part by the taste shown in the choice of certain articles of furniture, culled, Napier was sure, from other parts of the house during that week Miss Greta had spent alone here. Not her knowledge of values in *Möbeln* alone, but something less obvious, in the serene, uncrowded aspect, in the exquisite orderliness, lent the little room its special air.

Singleton walked straight to the window. It commanded the approach to the house and looked upon the sea. It was n't till a moment later that Napier verified this fact. On the dressing-table, which stood out two feet

or so in front of the window, his eyes had found a faded photograph. It showed a girl in her teens at another window. Two long plaits fell over the sill as the eager figure leaned out to greet, with all that joy and affection, the woman whom Napier was here to convict of felony and to cover with disgrace. No need of the signature under the sill to say the girl was "Miss Greta's ever loving Nan."

That first cursory glance about the room had seemed both to please and intrigue Singleton. His face wore the look of intentness, of subdued satisfaction, with which your sportsman addresses himself to a game he knows he's good at.

"He likes ferreting things out! He *likes* it!" Napier said to himself, as Singleton swung back with one of his easy movements and turned the key in the door.

"What will Greta think when she tries it and finds it locked, and *me* in here!" Lady McIntyre bemoaned to Napier.

"Oh, but she won't," answered Singleton. He nodded toward the window. "You'll see her coming." He laid down hat, stick, and gloves on the small table by the bed, and picked up a book lying there. He read aloud the title, "Pilgerfahrt by Gerhard," for Grindley's benefit, apparently, for he looked at that person interrogatively. "With Nan's love," he added, as though that might fetch Grindley.

But Grindley seemed to have neither literary nor sentimental curiosity. By the tall gilt screen set against the angle of the opposite wall Grindley halted, as if he had forgotten why he was there and felt unequal to the mental

effort of recalling. You 'd say he no more realized that the leaves of the screen were turned back so as almost to meet the angle described by the wall, than that the panels were composed of exquisite engravings after Fragonard, set in old gilt. Even when he moved a pace or two, you would say that he was speculating whereabouts in a room so scantily, albeit so charmingly, furnished as to boast only a single chair, should he find a place whereon to lay hat and stick, and the small despatch-case of the same color as the brown clothes he wore. Whether for that reason, or because of the inconspicuous way in which it was carried, Napier had not noticed the case till Grindley set it down against the skirting of the wall, along with hat and stick.

For those first moments, glued to the window, Lady McIntyre alternately watched the avenue leading to the house and watched the two strange men. She made no effort to disguise her perturbation at not having two pairs of eyes, the better to keep her poor little watch upon "dear Greta's things." "You don't, I suppose, expect to find anything contraband on her dressing-table," she said, as Singleton paused to run his eye over the glittering array. "You may know that 's all right when I tell you Sir William and I gave her the toilet set last Christmas."

Singleton stooped to the faded photograph, an act as offensive in Napier's eyes as the next was in Lady McIntyre's — his attempt to open the little, inlaid bureau.

"That is her writing-table," said the lady, with dignity. "Of course it 's locked. An engaged girl always locks her —"

"Yes; this, Grindley," Singleton said. And Grindley,

moving like a soft brown shadow, was there with some bits of iron hanging keywise on a ring. Some of these slender "persuaders" were notched and some were hooked. There were also one or two pieces of wire.

Lady McIntyre identified these objects instantly in a horrified whisper as, "Burglar's tools!"

"Or that, first?" Singleton interrupted, with a nod at the screen.

"Yes, it 's her box behind there," Lady McIntyre said, and clasped her hands. "But if you break *that* — a most queer lock — you can never mend it. And she 'll know what we 've —"

Mr. Grindley gave a slow head-shake. "American wardrobe trunk," he said, as though he had been tall enough to see over the close-set screen, and took no interest in what it hid. He inserted a steel object in the lock of the writing-table, and opened a flap as easily as if he 'd had the key; more easily than if Lady McIntyre had had it.

"Her private letters!" she murmured with horror. "Love letters!"

Far more offensive, Napier was sure, than if Grindley had fallen upon the neat packets and loose papers with greedy curiosity, was the bored cursoriness, as it looked, of the inspection. Perhaps the other man was really going to read them through when he had — heavens above! What was he doing in Greta's cupboard?

"Disgraceful!" said Lady McIntyre under her breath. Singleton was passing his hands along the row of skirts neatly hung at the side. The investigating fingers reached those other garments suspended at a greater height. From supports, hooked upon a bar set overhead, depended after-

noon and evening gowns — the pink cotton, the black and gold, the lemon-colored — all of familiar aspect, and yet in this collapsed state odd-looking, defenseless, taken at disadvantage. Napier with some difficulty recognized the apple-green silk, all its sauciness gone, as dejected now as a deflated balloon. And this stranger's hand upon them!

"Disgusting familiarity, *I* call it. He 'll be feeling in her pockets next," Lady McIntyre whispered tremulously. "I don't know how I can bear to be here."

Napier himself was too aware of a Peeping-Tom unseemliness in looking in upon these privacies to stand there watching. He turned again to the glittering dressing-table and the treasure it enshrined. What would n't he give to be able to slip that photograph in his pocket? Nan looked at him out of her window with unsullied trust.

Napier glanced nervously out of the other, the window behind the dressing-table. While he had been watching Singleton and looking at the pictured face, Nan might easily have come into the house; for Lady McIntyre, too, had clean forgotten that side of her sentinelship.

Napier turned round, so palpably listening, that even Lady McIntyre in the midst of her agitations saw what must be in his mind.

"Yes, *any* moment they 'll be in upon us!" She fled again to the window.

"Grindley, here!" Singleton called from the cupboard.

But Grindley had found something, at last, which, though it seemed not to interest him, had proved itself worthy to be abstracted. Not one of the love-letters, as Lady McIntyre plainly feared. It was nothing more ex-

citing than Greta's French dictionary. Grindley came away from the littered bureau, holding the flat volume open in his hand, and turning the leaves at random.

Singleton joined him. "What have you got there?"

"La Motte's Dictionary."

"Is that all?" Singleton dismissed it.

Not so Grindley. He stooped, and laid the book on the floor beside his brown case.

Singleton was obviously disappointed. He glanced back at the open writing-table. "Nothing else?" he said.

"Only this," Grindley took a ball-nibbed pen out of the tray.

Singleton examined it carefully, "Yes." He, too, appeared to think the pen worthy of all care. He opened Grindley's nearly empty attaché case and laid the pen on top of a piece of brown paper, which covered something at the bottom. "And the ink?" He seemed to wait for it.

Grindley was understood to say, "Not yet." Lady McIntyre pointed out the twin pots on the silver tray engraved *G. v. S. from N. E. Christmas 1913*. "This is the ink," she said. Nobody seemed to hear. Grindley had gone to the dressing-table, leaving behind him open drawers and Greta's papers in confusion.

Lady McIntyre followed. "I must trouble you," she said, with dignity, "to put the writing-table as you found it."

"It is n't necessary," murmured the outrageous Grindley.

"But that is monstrous! You promised — at least, the other one —" She looked round. The other one, lost to

view, was pursuing his nefarious course in the hanging cupboard.

"You heard him, Mr. Napier?" She spoke with tremulous bitterness.

"If I let them investigate quietly, no one need ever know."

"Yes, *if* we found we were mistaken,"— Singleton stuck his head out of the cupboard to say. "But, you see, we find we are not mistaken." He disappeared amongst folds of apple-green silk and lemon chiffon.

"Not mistaken!" cried Lady McIntyre.

"What have you discovered?" Napier called to Singleton.

It was Grindley, ludicrously inadequate, who answered, "The pen."

Lady McIntyre ran to the open attaché case and took it out. Grindley, at the dressing-table, fingering Greta's toilet-set, kept a vacant eye on Lady McIntyre.

"What could be more innocent than a perfectly new pen? Look, Mr. Napier. It's never been used, not even once!" She thrust the pen into Napier's hand.

"Look at the point," advised Grindley.

"Well, *look* at it. Perfectly clean. If it *matters*," Lady McIntyre said, "that pen has never *touched* ink. And how can you write with a pen if you don't write with ink?"

"We might — ask the lady," suggested Grindley, who was actually opening and unscrewing Greta's silver toilet things, holding bottles up to the light, smelling at corks and stoppers. He slipped out of its silver shell a small

bottle of thick blue glass. He uncorked it and applied it gingerly to his nose.

"This is it," he said.

Lady McIntyre, with the dive of a dragon-fly, was at his side. "You think because that's labelled 'Poison,' there's something suspicious about her having it. It just shows! That bottle is part of the manicure set. Read what it says above the label," she commanded.

"*Pour les ongles,*" the obliging young man pronounced with impeccable accent. "Yes." And he took the bottle over to the attaché case.

Lady McIntyre made a motion to arrest, to retrieve. As Napier laid a hand on her arm, trembling, she stood still.

"We must let them go through with it," he said.

She looked at him. With an effort Napier could only partly gage. Lady McIntyre recovered herself. "Go through with it? Of — of course. How else,"— she flicked her ear-rings with her drawing-room air —"how else could we convince them?"

Singleton, with some display of muscle, had dragged out from behind the pendent draperies a square, canvas box.

"Ah, that,"— Lady McIntyre went forward, maintaining valiantly the recovered, drawing-room manner —"*that* is her hat-box. What they can want with her hat-box!" She tried to smile at Napier.

"Heavy for hats," remarked Singleton, in a tone of subdued pleasure. The box was furnished not only with the usual leather handle on the top, but with one on each side. To the top handle the label was still tied. It bore across the upper end the printed legend,

By its two steel handles, which had fitted neatly into felt-lined sockets in the cane-and-canvas top, Grindley and Singleton lifted out the metal box. They laid it on its front. With those short, vicious hammer-strokes that seemed to shake the house, Grindley cut the hinges through. He and Singleton set the box upright and forced back the top.

CHAPTER XIII

AFTER the first moment of stupefaction, Lady McIntyre's, "Oh — a — is that all?" resolutely proclaimed there was nothing out of the way in a governess having a box half full of . . . books chiefly, were n't they?

The first thing Grindley took out was a roll of tracing-paper. He undid it. He smoothed it flat. He turned it over. He held it up to the light.

"Nothing! Not a thing!" breathed the lady.

Three pairs of eyes had fallen simultaneously on a letter which had been underneath the roll of paper — a letter unaddressed, in a sealed envelope. Grindley opened it. Singleton leaned over to read it, too. All that Napier could see was that the communication appeared to be in German script, not written compactly, as the national instinct for economy seems to inculcate. The lines were wide apart. Grindley's thick finger, traversing the blank space, seemed to emphasize this fact.

"Nothing there," said Singleton, dipping his hand in the box again.

"Nothing that jumps to the eye." Grindley laid letter and envelope on the floor by the tracing-paper. Out of a shallow cardboard box, full of numbered films, Singleton had briskly helped himself to one after another. He held each in turn up to the light — held the first two so that Grindley could see them.

"To *keep* such things! It's the kind of extraordinarily rash things they do." A look of understanding passed between the two secret-service men.

"They?" inquired Lady McIntyre, and as no one answered, "Rash?" She turned her helpless eyes on Napier. "What a world to live in, when to take a little picnic snapshots is 'rash'!"

"You have a dark room? She develops her own photographs?"

Lady McIntyre swung her ear-rings.

While Singleton was running rapidly through the picture series, Grindley took out a book — a leather-covered book, with a lock.

"A diary, that is, just like mine," said Lady McIntyre. "Her diary had a lock, too," she said. But the fact did not save this one from desecration. Off came the lock at the edge of the chisel, and Grindley was bending his head over pages of exquisite writing. That it was German, seemed in no wise to disconcert Grindley. "Plain sailing," was his comment as he handed the book over to Singleton, who, with a kind of affectionate regret, put down the two films he had been studying side by side. "Very instructive, seen *seriatim*," he remarked, as he swept them toward the case, and took the diary.

Whether it was a fellow feeling for this private chronicle with the lock like hers, yet so ineffectual, certainly the sight of Greta's diary being passed from one strange hand to another made a sudden breach in Lady McIntyre's hard-won self-control.

"How you *can!*" She leaned forward to cast the three words into the dull face again over Greta's box. Grind-

ley's hand was about to close upon a little gray silk bag which had fallen out of an envelope. Lady McIntyre was before him.

"I 'll see what that is!" she said.

Napier winced in anticipation of the undignified struggle to which Lady McIntyre's action had laid her open.

But not at all. Grindley's good manners suffered him to make only the most civil protest.

"I would n't, really. Please, take care!"

Too late. Lady McIntyre had untied the drawstring and opened the innocent-looking, feminine thing, only to draw back, choking. Then she sneezed loudly. She sneezed without intermission, as she held the bag out at arm's length.

"Wha-atchew! What-atchew — *is* it? Chew!"

Grindley, handling the bag with caution, returned it to the thick waxed envelope and added that to his collection. Singleton had looked up an instant from his reading, sympathy in his attitude, a gleam of entertainment in his eye at recognition of this new object lesson in the unadvisability of a lady's poking her nose where a secret-service man warns her not to.

Napier stood anxiously over Lady McIntyre during the final paroxysm.

"What was that stuff?" he demanded of the oblivious Grindley.

"Usually snuff and cayenne," Singleton answered for him. "Harmless, unless it 's flung into the eyes."

"*Flung in!*" gasped Lady McIntyre, receiving, as it were, full in the face her first staggering suspicion.

"If you get only a whiff, the thing to do is to gargle and

bathe the eyes," Singleton advised politely, and fell upon his book again, like some intrigued reader of romance.

Lady McIntyre declined to go away to bathe and gargle. She sat wiping her streaming eyes and letting loose an occasional sneeze.

There still remained in the boot box, as Napier had seen, two modest-sized receptacles to be examined. One was of nickel or silver; the other, a trifle larger, appeared, as Grindley lifted it out, to be an ordinary japanned cash-box, with the key sticking in the lock.

"Achew! chew! chew!" said Lady McIntyre, trying to clear her watery vision, the better to verify the fact that the box was full of English gold — most of it done up in amateur rouleaux of twenty pounds each, sealed at each end.

Surprising, but not criminal, Lady McIntyre's inflamed face seemed to say. "Maybe," she wedged the words in between a couple of less violent sneezes; already she was steadying herself after the shock of knowing that gray bag of devilment in Greta's possession —"maybe she is custodian — others'— savings — some refugee."

Grindley had tumbled the rouleaux and the loose gold into his handkerchief. He knotted it and threw it into his case.

"I shall tell her!" Lady McIntyre's still streaming eyes arraigned him. "She shall know you 've got it."

"Of course," said Grindley.

"And now for the jewel case." Reluctantly Singleton closed the diary.

But it was n't a jewel case. No close observer needed Singleton's, "This is what you were looking for," to recog-

nize Grindley's satisfaction at discovering a spirit lamp and alcohol flask fitted neatly into the box.

"It 's to heat curling-tongs," said Lady McIntyre in her rasped and clouded voice. "That 's all it is. Nothing in this world but the arrangement to heat her tongs. Every woman —"

"Miss von Schwarzenberg does n't curl her hair with tongs," said the astonishing Grindley, a man you would n't have expected to know if a woman's hair were green and dressed in pot-hooks.

"How do you know she does n't use tongs?" Napier could not forbear asking. Grindley, working with the lamp, made no reply.

"Do we understand you to say she does curl her hair with tongs?" Singleton inquired politely of Lady McIntyre. It was clear to the pair that part of Singleton's affair was to transact his business with as little friction as possible, to establish coöperation in the most unlikely quarters. "You *can't* say she uses tongs," he said persuasively.

"I certainly cannot say she does n't. Neither can you." Lady McIntyre stuck to her point as if she knew what hung upon it.

Grindley had unscrewed the wick cap. If she did n't use tongs, certainly she had used the lamp; the wick was charred. He lifted out the receiver and shook it. "Nearly full," he said.

Singleton was rapidly going through the few things left in the bottom of the safe. Several leather jewel cases. They revealed a truly astonishing store — chiefly diamonds.

"She can have these back at once," Singleton said, setting the cases down by Lady McIntyre's feet.

out something rolled in a scarf of Roman silk. The two objects inside were a small box of cartridges and a revolver. It was then that Lady McIntyre, rising and steadying herself by the chair, showed how far she had come in these last moments. "At all events, you can't say you 've found any bombs!"

"No! oh, no!" If anything could minimize the implications of tragedy evoked by the sight of a revolver among the personal possessions of a lady in England, it would be the even pleasantness of Mr. Singleton's voice. "Nothing of *that* sort."

Singleton was busy putting away a medley of things into the attaché case, while Grindley was churning up the contents of the drawers in the American wardrobe trunk with the energy that seemed so nearly passive and was so uncannily effectual. The great trunk held no papers and only the lesser trinkets. But the store of purple and fine linen! Lace and lawn, and cobweb silk, dribbled from half-open drawers. Brocade and cloth, chiffon and velvet, swung out to view on adjustable supports. And all that brave show the unappreciative Grindley dismissed with a single word, "Nothing," and back he went to La Motte's Dictionary.

Singleton picked up the jewels that had come out of the hat-box and held the cases out to Lady McIntyre.

She seemed, as she stood there steadying herself by the chair back, to have gone momentarily blind. Singleton suggested she should take care of the jewels.

"No; oh, no!" she shrank back, and then the poor soul broke into weeping. "Under *William's* roof!"

Singleton slipped the jewels into the brown suit-case and

led the way to the door. Grindley stood with La Motte open in the hollow of his arm. Now and then he made a note on a piece of paper, laid on the open page.

They waited for Lady McIntyre to master her tears.

"What are you meaning to do?" she demanded.

Singleton did n't hesitate an instant. The lady would be shown every consideration. Out of respect to Sir William.

"I suppose," said Lady McIntyre, with unexpected shrewdness, "it 's his duty to tell me that." She turned from Napier to the man who stood there with that awful "body of conviction" in the brown suit-case.

"It will be terrible to have her here — terrible. But all the same you shall not take her to London to-night."

"I am afraid those are our instructions," Singleton answered deferentially.

"Instructions!" she echoed. "Sir William issues the instructions here. You cannot take her away till he comes home. Mr. Napier,"— she clutched at his arm —"will you ring up Sir William?"

On the other side of the threshold Grindley paused an instant and looked into the room again. Reluctantly he shut La Motte, and went back for his hat and stick.

"Oh, come away and shut the door!" wailed Lady McIntyre, casting a look of horror about the raided room. A few paces down the hall she loosed her hold on Napier and walked in front of the three men. Even before she got to her own room, she put out her hand like a blind person feeling for the door. She seemed to fall against it. It opened and hid the little figure from their sight.

Napier followed guiltily behind the brown case, glancing in at open doors, listening over the banister.

Nan! His heart suddenly stood still. There was the cap of Mercury on the chest in an angle of the lower hall.

"What is it?" asked the observant Singleton.

"She has — they have come back!" said Napier.

"Oh, no." He went on with the same light, swinging gait.

If Singleton was not, certainly the noiseless brown presence at Napier's side could not fail to be aware of the afternoon letters on a table in the hall below. The uppermost in one pile bore the American stamp. That would be addressed Miss Anne Ellis.

An undefined dread which had lurked in the dark of Napier's mind, masking itself as dislike of the man Singleton, betrayed more than a hint of its presence in an anxious speculation as to whether these men, licensed to break all laws of human dealing, ought to be left alone a moment in company with letters and telegrams, and God knew what, down there on the hall table.

"We 'll go into Sir William's room and telephone him," Napier suggested.

Singleton looked at his watch.

"He 's due here in about a quarter of an hour. Meanwhile, we 'd better take these in out of the wet."

Napier could have sworn Singleton was studying the top letter on Miss Ellis's pile. The only ones he touched were Greta's. All the same, Napier had to put pressure on himself to avoid picking up Nan's letters and secreting them in his own pocket. He seriously considered the possibility of going out and heading off her return. He

fixed an inimical eye on Grindley — Grindley, wandering about taking his bearings, La Motte still open on his arm. Now he was at the door, looking out — not for Sir William at all, as it seemed to Napier's mounting uneasiness. He was standing there looking out for Miss von Schwarzenberg's "ever loving" friend. Her "confederate," he might be capable of thinking.

Napier struggled with a vivid prevision of Nan coming back to find that ambiguous figure — Grindley — at the door. And when she knew what he stood there for, would n't she by every look and motion proclaim her share in the Schwarzenberg's fate?

Napier returned hastily to the man at the table.

"You have," Napier suggested, "some idea, perhaps, when Miss von Schwarzenberg is likely to be here?"

In the instant of Singleton's pause to enter a note in that little book of his, footsteps sounded on the gravel. Steps so quick and light, whose could they be but — Napier stood braced to meet the misery of this "coming back." To see her for the first time after that fleeting rapture among the rocks — to see her like this! He turned his head. Grindley put out a slow hand. "I 'll take it," he said to a telegraph boy who stood there.

God! — the relief!

"You were saying, oh, yes, *When.*" Singleton pocketed his notebook. "If nothing is altered, she 'll be back with the others in an hour or so. Say, a little after six."

"From Sir William McIntyre's point of view might n't it be better to — a — detach Miss von Schwarzenberg from the rest of the party? To get some of what can't fail to be — a very disagreeable business over without — a —"

Singleton eyed him.

"Not a bad suggestion." He pulled out a time-table. "What do you say, Grindley, to doing without another night in that beast of an inn?"

Grindley was at his elbow, holding the orange-brown envelope, superscription uppermost. "*Schwarzenberg,*" all three read. Singleton dropped his time-table and laid hold of the envelope.

"No, you 'd tear it." Grindley's thick soft thumb was already gently inserted under the flap. He persuaded it. He put the envelope in his side pocket and opened the paper slip. As the two secret-service men closed together to read the message, Napier made a movement for which he derided himself, an instinctive drawing out of range, as though the telegram were the private property of these men.

Singleton dropped his end of the paper with an impatient, "Just exactly as interesting as usual." He gathered Miss Greta's letters in a pile and opened the brown case to receive them. The case was now so full that, in order to include the dictionary abandoned for the moment by Grindley, Singleton opened the fat volume in the middle, and spatchcocked it face down on the journal and the jewel boxes. Even so, the case refused to shut. Singleton turned La Motte out.

"What 's the good of it!"

"M'm." The sound Grindley made reminded one of a child mouthing a sweet. But his vacant eyes never left the telegram.

"You have n't told me,"— with difficulty Napier controlled his impatience —"I gather"— he went on —"that

you know where to lay your hand on Miss von Schwarzenberg?"

"Tea telephoned for by Mr. Grant, Golden Lion, Newton Hackett," Singleton answered, still readjusting the contents of the case.

"Shall I see if I can get her on the telephone?"

Singleton hesitated. Over his shoulder he looked round at Napier with the faintest possible trace of a smile.

"Just as you like."

"Yes, it 's I, Gavan Napier. Speaking from Lamborough."

She was surprised, greatly, you 'd say pleasantly, surprised. Had Napier not stopped her, she would have been welcoming, in spite of the fact conveyed by that subtle inflection which tells the experienced ear that the speaker at the other end of the wire is not alone.

"Don't use names," Napier warned. "Could you get away from your party and return here at once?"

"What 's happened?" the voice came sharply back.

"You might say Lady McIntyre wants you. She is n't ill. And she would specially like the party not to be broken up. The motor can go back for the others. One moment! Could you — use your influence to prevent *anybody* coming with you? Any one at all?"

After a second's pause the voice came pleasantly:

"The others have begun tea already. *Famished.* But I don't mind waiting to have mine with . . . perhaps with you! Good-by, dear —"

Napier nearly dropped the receiver.

"— *dear* Lady McIntyre."

Before he rang off, he stepped back as far as the cord

emy of this man, in the present universal instability of equilibrium, would n't it be a stupid as well as dangerous mistake?

"Smoke?" suggested Napier. He felt for his cigar case.

Singleton did n't mind if he did. As he sat down on the other side of the table, he dropped Miss Ellis's letter on the pile.

Oh, but the letter looked well on the table! It suddenly occurred to Napier, lightly slapping his pockets — what had he done with those cigars? — there was something not only attractive about Singleton, but downright likeable.

"It must be a curious life, yours," he said.

"Well, you know how it is yourself."

"*I know?*" It was one thing to leave off hating him, quite another to ally Gavan Napier with the underground work of the world of spies.

"*Nous pêchons aujourd'hui des plus gros poissons, surtout à,*"— he dropped out as lightly as a smoke-ring the final words, "Gull Island."

Napier, leaning forward to take back the burning match, very nearly fell off his chair.

"What do *you* know about —"

"Oh, Gull Island is one of our secret-service pets," Singleton went on, still in French — though it seemed the height of improbability that, had he spoken in English, any unseen listener could have distinguished words falling in the voice you would say was low by nature rather than by caution. "Jolly little place, Gull Island. I was there last month."

"*Comment!*" Napier said, accepting the medium chosen by his interlocutor. "You mean before I —"

"Oh, yes, two weeks before you reported. You did n't, so far as I remember,"— he seemed to indicate a flaw or even a suspicious circumstance —"you did n't connect this woman with it."

"What woman?"

"Oh, then there *is* more than one?"

"Oh, see here,"— Napier's patience, perhaps even his self-control, was wearing thin —"what 's the use of going on like this? You know there 's only one suspicious person hereabouts. What you could n't know is that I wrote from Scotland a full and complete statement."

"Who to?"

"To Sir William!"

"That was before you were warned?"

"Warned?"

"To keep the Gull Island business to yourself."

Before Napier could bring out his slightly annoyed defense, Singleton went on: "I would n't have dreamed of broaching the matter, if I had n't just got my instructions to meet you in London for the express purpose of telling you that the importance of Gull Island is n't a thing of the past." He waited while Napier digested the news in a wondering silence.

"In your report to headquarters you did n't, I gather, mention the lady," Singleton persisted.

"Why should I? So far as she was concerned I had only my unsupported suspicions to go on. I thought it only fair to Sir William to leave the initiative *there* to him."

"I see. It was perhaps the more convenient thing to do."

"It was n't at all convenient," Napier assured him with asperity. "I got into such particularly hot water over my case against the lady that I don't at this moment know whether I am still private secretary to Sir William McIntyre or not."

"Why is that?"

"She persuaded him that I was, to put it mildly, salving my wounded feelings. Oh, she 's —" Napier jumped up, and went to the door.

"Yes, she is," Singleton's voice sounded an amused agreement.

"*What* is she?" Napier demanded, turning round. "Does anybody know?"

"Well, what do you think we 're for?"

Napier stood there, an embodied interrogation. How closely did it touch Nan Ellis, the knowledge this man had?

"We 've kept an eye on her for some time. She has been unconsciously —" Singleton flicked his cigar-ash — "of considerable use to us. Oh, she 's well known. Devils for Pforzheim and Engleberg."

"Engleberg? Who is Engleberg?"

"The older one, who called himself Carl Pforzheim. A slim pair, those two!"

"He got away?"

Singleton smiled. "One got away — Carl. Ernst is — extremely safe."

The thought of Lady McIntyre came to Napier, along with the horror of the picture Singleton had evoked; intimates of Kirklamont, donors of Boris and Ivan; Mr. Ernst, in prison waiting for the firing squad; Mr. Carl

showing his "nice teeth" in a rictus of terror before turning to take McClintock's knife in his throat.

"There's no call to make a mystery of this little Schwarzenberg affair," Singleton was saying. "The woman is better known in Brussels. Better known still in Cincinnati, Ohio." Singleton smiled. "She has a great reputation in a certain suburb of that semi-German city. The good people of New Bonn are proud of her. She has come on so."

"Come on?"

"Oh, she began to 'come on' from the moment she arrived, twenty years ago, at the age of twelve."

"You don't mean she's thirty-two?"

"Thirty-three, to be exact. She came from a suburb of Berlin with an older sister, to help in the patriarchal family of the Cincinnati uncle and aunt."

"The millionaire uncle?"

Singleton's nod of pleasant indulgence accompanied the more exact information.

"He'd laid by money enough to start a little beer garden. The older sister soon went out to service. This one insisted on going to school. But she helped in the beer garden between whiles. Made a friend of one of the habitués, a fiddler in the local band. She sang for the beer garden customers, and they threw her dimes. At fourteen she got an engagement at the little German theater. She sent home the passage money for a brother. Instead of putting him to a trade, she put him to school. This girl of fifteen. The next year she sent for another brother. *Même jeu.* Oh, she's been very decent to her family. But the voice of great souls appears always to

have been Miss Schwarz's undoing. Her voice was unformed. She forced it. Broke it. At eighteen an end to hopes of great operatic career. A year or so later she went on the stage. Played in German a couple of seasons. Graduated into English. Then there 's a goodish interval which we have n't yet filled. Nearly six years, I make it. When she next comes to the surface, she had fallen in with Pforzheim at Washington, and was falling out with him in Paris. The Brussels' Secret Service had employed him on that Duc de Berry case. *She* did the work. Pforzheim, as usual, got the credit, and naturally most of the cash. She needs an awful lot to keep her going — this woman. They quarreled over the amount. She washed her hands of the job and of him, and back she goes to America. Out of the glare and excitement of Paris and a partnership in Pforzheim's plottings, to — what do you suppose? To teach music, of all things! In San Francisco, of all places! In a private family!" Singleton laughed. "These Ellises!" He nodded at Miss Anne's letters. "Again and again we 've traced Greta Schwarz doing this and that for the International Bureau, being successful and well paid, and suddenly chucking the whole thing and going back to respectability and dullness. An inversion of the desire of the moth for the flame. The desire of the butterfly to labor, to store honey and esteem!"

Napier brought him back to the point. "Now that you 've landed Pforzheim, any more use for her?"

"None on earth."

"But if in this case she 's been only Pforzheim's tool, is the evidence enough —?"

Singleton nodded.

"Her neck 's in the noose. You don't believe her neck 's in the noose?"

The smile was ugly. It gave a certain sportsman's pleasure to Napier's reply.

"She 's a very clever person — is Miss von Schwarzenberg."

"Well, my experience with all these people," returned Singleton, easily, "is that the cleverest do the rashest things. Who takes care of Pforzheim's tracery of fortifications? Pforzheim? Not he. This woman, with twice his wits. And what do you think of her setting down in that idiotic diary full reports of conversations among officials? Some at dinner, some overheard. And do you think Number Eighteen — that is Pforzheim — do you think he was going to run the risk of having code messages traced to him? Not a bit of it. The compromising messages come to her."

"How do you know?"

Singleton dropped his long fingers on the orange envelope and played a brief tattoo.

"We stopped another of the same sort, signed in her name, this morning at the local post-office."

"And you could read it?"

"Anybody could read it. Order on an Amsterdam broker to buy Tarapaca nitrates."

"And what did that tell you?"

"Absolutely nothing. We 've tapped messages of the same sort before."

"Then you are no forrader."

"We were n't when we got here this afternoon." Al-

though the conversation had been carried on in low-voiced French, Singleton leaned over the table and dropped out the next sentence in a tone that barely escaped the suspicion-stirring whisper, "Grindley found a French dictionary in her writing-table."

"What good did that do you?"

"All the good in the world." Singleton's face shone with the good it did him. "You see," he went on, in that careless-sounding undertone, "the hitch was we could n't hit on the code. That 's why we 've been giving her rope."

"And now?"

"Now—?" In a flash of pantomime Singleton with one hand suggested the knotting round the throat. His quick fingers carried the invisible cord above his head. He dangled the phantom felon in the air. "And the beauty of it is, she 's done it herself."

"I wonder," said Napier.

"You would n't if you knew Grindley!" Singleton smiled comfortably as he lay back in the high carved chair. "Frightfully intelligent boy, Grindley. You see," — suddenly he bent over the table again —"it 's like this. They send about a devilish lot of their information in the form of brokers' orders. I dare say, if you 've noticed, she 'll pretend to read the 'Financial Times.'"

He waited only a second for the verification Napier withheld. But the familiar picture sprang up at call: Miss Greta half coquettish, half girlishly — appealing, "I must see what 's happened to my poor little earnings." Sir William amused, pleasantly malicious, "As if you 'd know, even if they told you! You 'd far better ask me."

"Thank you immensely, but women ought n't to be so dreadfully dependent. I 'd like to *make* myself understand. Perhaps in time —"

And Sir William's laughter: "When rivers run uphill and kittens cry to-whitt, to-whoo!"

Singleton had taken out a note-book and scribbled two or three lines.

"She 'll telegraph something like that." He held the book open on the table under Napier's eyes. "She would n't care a button if the post-office people gave that up or whose hands it fell into."

Certainly in Napier's hands it would have made Miss Greta no trouble.

"You might call it stupid," was his comment.

"Exactly. Nobody could be expected to see danger to the state in an order to buy Nepaul rice or Sumatra cigars. It 's all right and runs on greased rails, till Grindley comes along. He turns over that La Motte of hers, till he notices some minute pencil-marks on one of the green advertisement pages at the back. The marks were so small that no eyes but Grindley's would have noticed them at all. And even Grindley could n't read them without a magnifying glass." Singleton leaned over suddenly till he could command the avenue, stretching, sun-flecked, empty to the gates.

"Do you always hear the motor before it gets to the plantation?"

"Always."

"Well, the kind of thing that came out under the glass was: 'Market dull — Ascertain R — activity.' R," interpreted Singleton, "meaning Hosyth, of course. 'Prices

falling — Leaving Southampton. Advise purchase — Report to Seventy-Six.'

"Seventy-six is the number of the German agent at Amsterdam. We've learned a good deal since we discovered that is where seventy-six hangs out. This message, for instance,"— he nodded at the one between them on the table —"says, 'Advise immediate purchase Erie at 22¼ — ¾ and steel 129⅝, market rising.' It's clear, according to the La Motte code, that something's got to be reported instantly to the German secret service agent at Amsterdam. The question is what? Even if we intercepted the message, we should n't be any the wiser. Or, rather, we should n't have been, if Grindley had n't gone juggling with the numbers of the stock quotations till it occurred to him, after trying the thing twenty other ways." He stopped.

"Yes," Napier threw in. "I've been wondering why you tell me all this."

His smile was slightly abstracted.

"It's all right, I thought I heard a motor," said Singleton. He met Napier's eyes. "It's my business to know men, and before it was my business I knew you." That was the sole reference made to the Oxford episode. "Grindley's got an idea," Singleton went on and his face reflected the brilliance of it, "that the consonants in the occasional short-code words interpolated into some of the messages — words like Tubu, and so on — stand for the class of ship the submarines are to look out for. Tubu equals Torpedo boat. Kreuzer, Kleinkreuzer, Zerstorer, and so on, are indicated, we think now, in the same way."

Napier made no pretense at sharing Singleton's delight in these speculations.

"All this information," he exclaimed, "going back and forth with absolute impunity!"

"Until to-day," Singleton breathed out from full lungs. "Great day this for the service!"

But Napier sat appalled. No ship to leave our harbors, but its character and course might be known to the enemy lying in wait! He began to believe things he'd scoffed at. It was true, then, the Germans had coded in their secret-service ciphers every naval base, every ammunition center, every camp, every war-vessel of the British fleet. He said as much, with raging in his heart.

"And while ship after ship, crew after crew, goes down, what is *our* secret service doing!"

One member of it was blowing smoke-rings. Not till the supply of smoke gave out, did Singleton fall back on words:

"You hear very little about the English secret service, and you hear a lot about the German. That, to begin with, is an advantage, greater than you can appreciate. I don't propose to subtract from it. But there's no law against my talking about the German system. Their greatest technical flaw is that they lose themselves in a wilderness of detail. Their men will know all about the trajectory and penetration of the fourteen-inch gun, and they'll understand so little the men who make the guns that our quarrels among ourselves, our industrial unrest, is taken to mean that we're ready to consent to 'a German peace.' They'll report reams — we've seen 'em, got 'em docketed in our drawers — reams about the ordnance factories of the Ar-

gyle works. But as for the new projectile we 're turning out a few hundred yards away, they 'll have no more idea of *that* — till it goes whistling and roaring through their compact formations — than they have that the money they 're still secretly supplying to Pforzheim comes straight to our Intelligence Department. All the same, where the Germans fail is n't in brains. Trouble with the ruck of 'em is, they go from the extreme of sentimentality at one end, to the extreme of brutality at the other. Pforzheim! A sort of modern Werther, with a capacity for cruelty that would turn a South Sea cannibal sick. This woman, too. Risk her own life and lose Pforzheim his, colossal business in hand, and goes on like the heroine of a shilling shocker. Can't resist collecting all the silly 'properties.' Simply dotes on the paraphernalia, pistol, and what not. One of the unwritten rules of the service: 'Make no memoranda. Carry no documents; only by rare exception carry arms.' She goes putting down compromising details, in a letter, for the amateurish pleasure of airing her 'inside knowledge' of the British Cabinet, and making use of invisible ink. No self-respecting British spy would be caught dead with most of the truck she 'd collected in that box."

Napier had the very soundest conviction that, however poorly Singleton thought, or pretended to think, of Miss Greta's qualifications, he had set a guard of some sort at every possible avenue of escape. The woman was already as much a prisoner as any badger in the bottom of a bag. "If she 's a specimen of the amateur," Napier said, "Heaven save us from the professional!"

Singleton laughed. "Heaven would need to look lively.

I 'd hate to be the custodian of damaging secrets with a fellow like Grindley about. You 'll see." He struck his fist on the table. " A hundred pound sterling to a German pfennig, Grindley 'll come back with that message from the Dutch agent neatly decoded. Oh, Grindley 's immense! " Singleton rolled one long leg over the other, luxuriating in Grindley's immensity. " We are n't supposed to know each other — Grindley and I. But who would n't know Grindley! As a matter of fact, I introduced him to the chief, and the chief luckily is n't a stickler for the continental rules in this business. We English humanize it. What 's the result? We totally mystify the rule-ridden Hun, and we 've got the most efficient secret service in the world."

" Have we? " Napier started involuntarily at the sound of the motor turning off the high road and running now through the plantation with a muffled hum. " Here comes the — amateur! "

No acumen was required to read the fact that, in Napier's opinion, Singleton underestimated the noxious power of the amateur agent.

" I don't deny,"— the secret-service man stood up, but he dropped his voice to a lower register, as though the invisible comer were already at the door —" I 'm not for a moment denying that this woman can do a certain amount of harm. She 's got to be suppressed. But think of what she *might* do! She 's had every opportunity, and she 'll always fall short."

" Not ruthless enough? "

" Oh, she can be as ruthless as you please,"— Singleton for some reason had crossed the hall. He stood leaning

against the wall near the billiard-room. "She could put a bullet in you nicely, after she'd blinded you with cayenne. But,"— Singleton shook his head —"she has n't the right standards."

"Oh, standards?" echoed Napier. It seemed a queer word.

"At heart," said Singleton, "she has longings, as I read per record — ineradicable longings — for, what do you think? Respectability!" He smiled and then shook his fine head. "To be any good as a spy you must be either aristocrat — a perfectly satisfying law unto yourself, or you must be *canaille*. This woman — she's *bourgeoise* to the core, and a Romantic to boot. There does n't exist a more fatal combination. I tell you,"— he stood erect —"Greta Schwarz is done for. *Kaput!*"

"She does n't look it." Napier, leaning over, had caught sight of the car.

Gliding round the drive, the handsome occupant visibly luxuriating in the comfort and elegance of Lady McIntyre's limousine, Greta von Schwarzenberg lay back against the dove-colored cushions, with only her heightened color to show her the least stirred by the unexpected summons. Or was the color there, like a couple of flags, hung out in honor of Napier's return?

"*Ecoutez!*" Singleton's head appeared an instant out of the drawing-room door. "There's just one thing missing in that box of tricks upstairs — pinch of white powder. You must look out for that if we don't want a corpse on our hands."

"*I* must look out? See here —"

Singleton's head vanished.

CHAPTER XV

GRETA smiled at him.

"What has happened?" another would have demanded, on sight of Napier's face; not Miss Greta. She paused on the step of the motor, calmly giving the chauffeur directions about going back for the others. "Nice to see you home again." She held out her hand to Napier.

He led the way into the hall.

"You look rather disturbed," she commented drily.

Disturbed, indeed! Who would n't at finding such a business shifted on his shoulders? "We expected Sir William before this,"— Napier's hesitation was only outward. Inwardly he was cursing with extreme fluency. "The train service is horribly disorganized."

"Everything is disorganized," responded Miss Greta, drawing off her glove. She caught sight of her telegram. The heavy, white fingers paused in the act of opening it. A change, quick, subtle, came over her face. "Some one has been tampering with this!" She spoke in a sudden, harsh voice, Napier had never heard before. He was conscious that guilt was printed large on his countenance.

"Yes, it 's been tampered with." He in his turn spoke loud enough for the words to reach Singleton.

"Hush!" said Miss Greta, to his astonishment. "Come —" she led the way across the hall, toward the drawing-room.

"I must wait here, for Sir William," said Napier, lamely.

Miss Greta stood looking at him an instant, then she took the telegram out of the envelope and glanced at it. After a moment's reflection she folded it up, replaced it in the envelope, folded the envelope small, and thrust it in her belt.

"You 'd better tell me," she said in an undertone, "what has been going on." As Napier hesitated, her growing uneasiness got the better of her. "I 'll ask Lady McIntyre." She went quickly toward the staircase.

"No, no, come back." He waited till she turned. "There 's been some one — some one was sent down from London to — look into things."

Wide and innocent, the china-blue eyes were on him. "To look into what things?"

"Yours."

"Mine? What on earth for?" She smiled, divided, it would seem, between diversion and stark bewilderment.

For a second, Napier forgot the man in the next room. "I 'm afraid it 's all up, Miss Greta." He had never called her "Miss Greta" before, never spoken so gently.

She came over to the table. "And why," she asked in a level voice, "do you think *that,* Mr. Gavan?" She had never used his Christian name before.

"They 've found — what they were looking for."

"And what were they? Not"— she drew herself up suddenly —"not that *that* matters," she said with a towering contempt. "The thing that *does* matter is n't that in these terrible times *all* foreigners are suspect. The thing that matters is that Lady McIntyre and you — *you* should allow strange people to —" Her quivering lips

could form no more for the moment. She pressed her handkerchief to her mouth. "Were you present when they —"

He nodded.

"How you *could!*" From a great height she dropped contempt on him. And she had scorn to spare for the men of the secret service. "They must be easily satisfied! What do they think they have found in my poor solitary trunk?"

It was perhaps better to go through with the odious business and get it over. "They found your journal."

"What of that?"

"Transcripts of conversations at official dinners —"

"What of that? *Always* I set down what interesting people say. Every diarist has done that since diaries began. Nan does it. Your friend, Julian Grant, does it. I've done it since I was twelve."

An effect of poise about her, a delicate effrontery in her tone, steeled Napier to ask: "And have you also, since you were twelve, made a practice of photographing fortifications?"

"*Fortifications!* Oh, this is the very lunacy of suspicion!"

"There was also a tracing of the most important of our new coast defenses."

"Tracing? What is tracing?" As Napier did not answer, she went on, "I have never seen such a thing."

"No, you would n't see it, not till you had heated the paper."

"You mean,"— she gasped —"something in what they call invisible ink? Who has put that among my papers?"

The pink in her face had not so much faded as deepened to a sickly bluish magenta, like the discoloration of certain roses before the petals fall. Napier looked away. She stood there, pouring her cautious, low-voiced scorn on some secret enemy. It was n't the first time in history this kind of villainy had been practised on an innocent person, a person whom *some*body — who was it? — (she clutched his arm) — whom somebody wanted to get into trouble, to get out of the way. The congested face looked swollen and patchy. Minute bubbles of saliva frothed at one corner of the mouth. Suddenly she faced about and made a rush for the stairs. But Napier, at her flying heels, caught her half-way up. He seized her by the shoulder, and he did it roughly, anticipating a struggle.

Instantly she was still. She dropped her cheek against his ungentle fingers. "Oh, Gavan, save me!"

"It 's too late." He drew his hand away. She turned to the friendlier banister and clung there. "They have taken everything," he said very low.

"Everything?"

"All the things you thought you had hidden."

"Hush!" She backed a step.

Napier, with the advantage of his inches, head and shoulders above her, had caught sight of an unfamiliar figure sitting in the upper hall, reading a newspaper. Grindley! Greta had not seen him, but she heard Sir William's voice coming out of Lady McIntyre's bedroom, and Lady McIntyre's raised in a sob: "William! William! — Need any one know? Outside us three and the police?"

"I don't see the slightest necessity." Sir William came out and shut the door.

"O Gavan, save me!"

PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY

He stood an instant ruffling up his hair and looking intensely miserable. Greta von Schwarzenberg had backed down the stair.

Sir William descended slowly, Grindley behind him. It was Sir William who started when he realized who was waiting there at the bottom. Napier saw that a strong impulse to turn tail and leave this unpleasant business had to be overcome. Sir William bustled on down. He passed Miss Greta without a sign.

"Where's the other?" he demanded of Napier, and just then Mr. Singleton strolled down the hall. Sir William nodded bruskly, and turned to the motionless figure of the woman. "I — a —" (he felt for his seals) "I am sorry to have to tell you that — a — that the police have convinced me you had better leave here."

"And why," she said, "should I leave here?"

"Because it appears that you abuse our hospitality."

She threw back her head. "What appears yet more clearly is that people *I* have trusted have betrayed me." Over the prominent blue eyes the lids drooped a little. "In my absence some one has laid a trap." She turned to Napier, with a breath-taking sharpness. "Is it you?"

He met her gaze. "I warned them about Gull Island, and I —"

"Gull Island! What has Gull Island to do with me?"

"No, no," said Sir William. "I don't myself connect you with the Gull Island business."

"Nor,"— she made a slight inclination that seemed to say she was not to be outdone in chivalry —"nor do I need to be told that *you,* Sir William, have no hand in this. *You* were n't made for such work."

Sir William's rolling eye caught, as it were, upon some unexpected support. It rested for one mollified moment.

"I have n't lived under your roof all these months," she went on, "under the protection of your great name, without understanding *you,* even though people you think your friends cruelly misunderstand me." The voice caught; she carried her handkerchief to her shaking lips. Singleton read signs in Sir William's countenance that made him anxious to end the passage between the owner of the great protecting name and the lady who invoked it. Singleton had joined Grindley, who stood leaning against the wall behind Sir William. In an impatient undertone, "Why did n't you tell him?" demanded Singleton.

"Did," Grindley answered. "Understood diary and tracing. Did n't give himself time to take in the —" His hand came out of his side pocket with a paper. Singleton plucked it away from him and carried it over to Sir William. As it passed, Napier caught a glimpse of Miss Greta's handwriting on a telegraph form bearing the post-office stamp.

"This was sent out from here at noon to-day." Singleton held the message under Sir William's eyes.

"Well, what of it?" retorted Sir William. "A perfectly proper instruction to a broker."

"Till it 's been decoded. If you like, Mr. Napier can explain how afterwards. What it means is:

"*Troopship leaves Southampton at seven to-night. Four searchlights playing constantly over harbor. No convoy.*"

There was a moment of deathlike silence. The woman stood as motionless as the carved banister at her back.

"Gavan," Sir William cried out, "is it true?"

"It 's true," he said.

"You say this information was sent —" The terror in the old man's face evoked the shattered and shattering image of a torpedoed ship, a sea full of drowning soldiers.

"We stopped it at the post-office."

Relieved of the crowning horror, Sir William shook off the paralysis that had held his restlessness in a vice. He hurried half a dozen steps up the hall and half a dozen down, jingling and muttering, "This — going on in my house!" He drew up into a jerk as the woman darted forward and planted herself in his way.

"Why not in your house?" she demanded wildly. "Have n't you a hand and two sons in what 's going on elsewhere? What are you doing to my brothers and friends? Is it worse to be drowned than to have your head battered to pulp? Than to have six inches of steel run through your stomach? Would n't it make *you* want to kill your enemies to see what I saw at the Newton Hackett drill-ground — a bag stuffed with straw, hung up — and hear the Staff Sergeant call it Fritz, and shout out, 'Now, men, straight for his kidneys!'"

"Gavan!" Sir William's voice called hoarsely, "make an end of this!" He went down the passage at the double, and shut himself in his private room.

Less the woman's rigid lips than her eyes asked Singleton, "What — do they — mean — to do?"

"You know what they do in a case of this kind in Germany?"

As if the men in front of her had been the firing-squad,

each look a bullet, she pitched forward. She would have dropped on her face, had Napier not caught her. He shook her slightly by the arm.

"Here's Nan," he said under his breath, "I mean Miss — your friend and Madge —" The noise outside pierced through the common preoccupation. The motor was rushing up the avenue. Napier led the woman to a chair.

As she sat down, her head fell back against the wall. The face had a dead look.

"We don't want her fainting," Napier said sharply, as Singleton leaned over her.

"There is an excellent train," remarked the secret-service man, "that leaves Fenchurch Street just about this time to-morrow."

She parted her shaking lips. "What has that — to do — with me?"

"You will be able to catch it."

"Shall I — shall I *really?*" She made a fruitless upward clutching at his arm. Her hand fell back into her lap, as though lamed. "Oh, no! You only want — *he* wants" — she slid a look at Napier — "to get me out of here without a scene. People's — feelings — must be spared. All — except mine."

"He told me," — Grindley's slow voice sounded, his eyes seemed to find vacancy where another's would have found Sir William's door — "he told me he did n't want to make it any worse for you than necessary!"

"Ah!" Something like life returned to the dead eyes. "Any worse, he means, for himself."

Napier turned away in disgust.

"Your seat in the Pullman," said Singleton politely, "is Number Sixteen."

"You don't m-mean they will let me go — *home!*"

"Yes; that 's the kind of fools we are."

As the voice Napier's ears were straining for called out, "Greta!" Nan came up the steps, leaning forward, as she ran, to see into the hall. "Is that you, Gre —" She hung a second, framed there in the doorway, with Madge behind her. "What *is* it, dearest?" She flew to the figure on the chair. She kneeled beside it. "Greta darling, you 've had bad news. Oh, what *is* it, my dear?" She chafed the slack hand. She laid it against her cheek. "Tell me, somebody!" she said, looking at Napier. "Who are these strangers?"

By a heroic effort, Miss von Schwarzenberg produced a masterpiece. "They — they are friends of mine," she said.

Singleton, after a faint smiling inclination in Miss Ellis's direction, as though accepting the audacious description as an introduction, made it good by saying to Miss von Schwarzenberg: "You understand then, you 're not to give yourself any trouble about tickets or accommodation. We will see to all that, won't we, Grindley?"

Grindley made a consenting rumble in his throat, and withdrew with Singleton to the front steps. They stood there conferring.

Napier waited on thorns to get a word with Nan. Was it impossible, was it too late, to put her on her guard? She seemed to have no eyes for any one but Greta. If Singleton had doubted the closeness of her relation to that notorious character, what must he think now?

"Try to tell me, dearest, what has happened." Nan hung over the slack form.

"Are you going somewhere, Miss Greta?" Madge pressed to the other side of the chair. "*Where* are you going?"

"And *why?*" Nan urged with a sharpness of concern. "You 've had bad news, my dearest, dearest."

"Yes." Greta remembered the telegram. She took the message out and half opened it. The paper was now folded in halves, instead of in quarters. Nan watched eagerly the fingers, which seemed to forget to open the telegram to her friend's eye.

"Poor father!" Miss Greta brought out the words in a tone so exquisitely gentle that Napier studied her face an instant.

He was sure that, as she sat there with that look of sorrow, absently tearing the telegram across, she was thinking lucidly and rapidly what her next move should be.

"Is it that your father is ill, dear?" Nan pressed closer to her side.

Greta nodded. Speechless with emotion, she tore the facing halves of the telegram to ribbons, the ribbons to fragments, all with the air, as it struck Napier, of the *fille noble* of the theater.

"Dear, I 'm terribly sorry!" Nan took her hand. "But you must n't think it is as serious as all that. Unless — what did it say?"

Greta looked down at her hands as though expecting to be able to hand the telegram over to speak for itself,

only to find it, to her surprise, reduced to the fineness of stage snow.

"He has been telegraphing me for days to come home. I did n't realize it meant — *this!*"

"Perhaps it 's not so bad as you think. Let us send them a message, reply paid. And you 'll see. The news will be better."

Miss Greta shook her head. "I have put it off too long already," she said faintly. "There is the slenderest chance of my finding him alive." Suddenly she pressed her handkerchief to her lips.

"Darling Greta, *do, do* let me telegraph!"

Miss von Schwarzenberg drew herself up. She rose. She stook like the heroine in Act III. "I am a soldier's daughter. I obey." She went toward the stairs.

CHAPTER XVI

MR. SINGLETON turned round, watch in hand. "You could catch the seven-two," he said politely.

Miss Greta, at the bottom of the staircase, faithfully flanked on one side by Nan, by Madge on the other, paused to consider her friend's kind suggestion.

"You could be ready inside an hour if we both helped," — Nan enlisted Madge as confidently as though there had never been a cloud between them.

"You 'll have *your* things to pack, too," Miss Greta reminded Nan.

"Oh, I 'll do that in ten minutes, after I 've — after we 've helped you." Nan's hand on Miss Greta's arm urged her to the enterprise.

"A — just a moment," Napier interrupted, the disorder of the raided room printed strong upon his inner vision. He saw it in pieces, like a Futurist picture — a corner of gaping drawer showing a confusion of papers, a glimpse of wardrobe-trunk dribbling flimsiness of lawn and froth of lace; in the foreground fierce, violent, malevolent, the broken metal shell of the false hat-box; Nan's eyes, no less clear, clearer than all else, looking down upon the chaos and indignity of a ruined life. She and the other "child," Madge, ought to be spared that spectacle. Over the newel of the banister Napier spoke directly to Nan for the first time since they had stumbled among rocks in the moonlight three weeks ago, fleeing before the tide that

raced up the shore, and before the tide higher, more menacing, which had risen in their hearts. "If you were to get a telegraph form — if we could write out a telegram to send to Miss von Schwarzenberg's father — or — to — to —" he floundered.

"Yes," said Miss Greta. "To my father's agent, Schwartz."

"Anybody you like. We 'll do our best"— he glanced at Singleton —"to get a message through."

Instead of going to the drawing-room for a telegraph-form, Nan took a scrap of paper out of her side pocket.

"Schwartz, *chez* Kalisch," Napier heard the dictation begin, before Madge created a diversion on her own account.

"Let me by, will you? I must go and tell Mother."

"Tell your mother what?" To Napier's relief, Miss Greta stopped her.

"That I 'm going to London to see you off."

"No, dear." Greta caught at a tress of the girl's thick hair.

In the swift parley that followed, Madge, who had been strangely quiet until now, flatly refused to be left behind. "I 'd go," she declared with sudden passion, "if I had to *walk* to London!"

Miss Greta leaned heavily against the banister. What would you? — her glance toward Singleton seemed to say. This is the devotion I am accustomed to inspire. Then hurriedly to Madge:

"Listen, darling. You must be very good and helpful in these last — whether they 're minutes or whether they 're hours —"

"*D-don't!*" A gulping sound, more angry than tender, was throttled in Wildfire's throat.

"You 'd better, first of all," advised Miss Greta, "go and telephone Brewster to get the rooms ready."

Napier gaped at the effrontery of the suggestion.

"She means at Lowndes Square?" Nan put the hurried question with eyes of sympathy on Madge, who was plainly not at the moment in any condition to speak. "Could n't I do it for you?"

The girl gave her old enemy a grateful glance and, instead of going first to her mother, pushed past the group at the foot of the stairs and bolted down the passage to Sir William's room.

"Lowndes Square?" Singleton repeated idly as he leaned against the door. "Is that Sir William's London house?"

Miss Greta did not trouble to reply to the obvious. "Schwartz *chez* Kalisch — you 've got that?"

Nan nodded.

"It will be more convenient," Mr. Singleton interrupted again, "for you to put up at a hotel."

Miss Greta appeared to consider this suggestion also to be unworthy of notice. She stood wrinkling her brows over the form of the message.

"Let me," said Napier. He held out his hand for Nan's fragment of paper. "Then you can get on with the telephoning."

Could n't Nan trust herself to look into his face? Without raising her eyes, Nan relinquished paper and pencil, and ran down to the telephone-room.

"Returning home via Folkestone to-morrow." Miss

Greta, still leaning against the newel, dictated as imperturbably as though she had a week in front of her for packing and preparation.

He hardly looked at the words he scribbled. The instant Nan disappeared and Singleton had sauntered down the hall in her wake, he said in an undertone, "You would n't like her to see your room. You 'd better go up and lock the door. Tell her to do her own packing first."

Miss Greta moved quietly up the stairs with Napier at her side. "They 've broken everything open?" she inquired, with contemptuous mouth.

"You know what they came for."

She seemed to consider that in its various bearings as she paused an instant. "It is n't part of what they came for, I suppose, to rob me of my savings?"

"They will tell you about that. But if you need anything —"

"I shall need everything! I have nothing fit to travel in." She spoke as though, amid the wreck of life and reputation, her wardrobe was the most important matter she had to think about.

"I should be glad," Napier answered, "if you would allow — you will find others equally ready, I dare say; but anything I could —" She would indignantly refuse, of course.

To his astonishment she stopped again, this time near the top landing, to say in a rapid whisper: "I must pay some bills. I am afraid I owe forty or fifty pounds."

Napier assured her that she would have a part at least of her money returned, "in some form."

"I greatly doubt it. I 've heard how they rob us."

"I beg your pardon, they do nothing of the kind. Not in *this* country!"

Miss Greta tightened her lip as she went on toward her room. She looked through plump Grindley as if he'd been thin air. Nan was flying up, two steps at a time, with a sheaf of telegraph forms.

Not far behind, Wildfire came flaming. "Father wants to see you, Mr. Gavan," she said.

Sir William was at the house telephone. "Yes, yes, my dear. No fuss, no foolishness, no publicity. The very fact of our allowing Madge to see her off — I thought it a horrible idea at first, but don't you see the value of it? Oh, here 's Gavan. I 'll come to you in a minute."

He hung up the receiver. "Look here, Gavan, the really important thing is that the silly newspapers should n't get hold of this. We are sending Madge up with an old servant to see the woman off. It will quiet any misgivings in the child's mind, a thing my wife is painfully exercised about. There 's no doubt it would be a dreadful shock to Meggy; and besides, the great thing is, it will choke off the suspicions of any nosing, ferreting little penny-a-liner. At least, it would if — my dear boy, there is n't any one else I would ask such a thing of, but do you think you could — would you —"

The strangeness of that leave-taking!

Miss Greta was the first to come down, calm, carefully dressed in *demi-deuil,* as one too fearful of the death of her father to have heart for her usual pinks and apple-greens, yet showing the front befitting the daughter of a soldier. She seemed not to notice Grindley coming slowly

down behind her, nor Singleton and Napier talking together on the steps. She occupied herself with her gloves as she waited till the men-servants passed her on their way back after hoisting a wardrobe-trunk and a hat-box on top of the service-motor.

"That American box, I am afraid it was very heavy." Miss Greta smiled as she dispensed her *douceurs* with the demeanor Napier could have sworn Miss Greta herself took to be suitable to the daughter of a German officer. It was, at all events, the demeanor popularly supposed to be the hallmark of the duchess.

"I hope," she said, advancing to the door and speaking to Singleton, "I hope you won't mind waiting a moment for Miss McIntyre. Sir William insists on sending his daughter along to look after me."

"Sir William should have more faith in us," returned Singleton, with his agreeable smile. "We have already telegraphed to Cannon Street."

"*Cannon Street!*" She supported herself an instant against the jamb of the door. And then she looked back to see that the butler was out of earshot. "Sir William can't know we are going to — Cannon Street, or he would n't be allowing Madge —" How well she knew one aspect of London!

"I don't mean the police station," replied Singleton.

"What *do* you mean?" she asked, indignant at the trick.

"The hotel."

She turned another look across her shoulder. The corridor was empty. "You are n't meaning I am not to leave the hotel?"

"You won't need to leave the hotel, not till about five o'clock to-morrow afternoon."

"Why did n't you say that in time to prevent my friends here from taking all the trouble to order my room to be ready for me at their house in town?"

Mr. Singleton did not stop to point out that the order had been Miss Greta's own and that he had politely opposed it. "I am sure you must appreciate that your preference for the convenience of a hotel will come better from you."

"There are thing I *must* go out for."

"Oh?" he looked at her.

"Shopping. I have *nothing* I can travel in."

Singleton caught Napier's eye, and both glanced at Behemoth disappearing down the drive on top of the service-motor. Really, these Germans! This coolly dictatorial woman knew as well as Singleton did that in the bag at his feet was evidence sufficient to imprison her for life. She also knew her luck in having been in the service of a man whom it was undesirable to involve in a scandal. Nan and Madge came running down, while Singleton, with his unfaltering politeness, was still trying to think of some way in which to meet Miss Greta's objection. "You have so many devoted friends," he suggested, "perhaps some one could do these commissions for you."

"No."

"Then I am afraid you will have to postpone your shopping till you reach home."

"*I* could do your shopping," Madge volunteered.

"You see!" Singleton went down the steps and turned to hand the ladies in.

Napier was sure that Miss Greta was as aware as he was of the forlorn, frightened little face peering out from the drawn blind in Lady McIntyre's room. But the woman, settling herself calmly in the car, gave no sign; at least not till Madge, on a note of sympathy that struck Napier as curious coming from that source, said with an upward glance, "Mother!" And when Greta still affected to be oblivious, the girl said peremptorily, "Look!"

"Where? Oh!" Greta raised her face. She did n't bow; merely smiled. It was one of the saddest smiles possible to see. "Your poor mother had one of her prostrating headaches to-day. I am sorry." And then the car rolled away, bearing a haunting memory of that face at the window.

If Nan's excitement at the thought of nearing London helped the party over some difficult moments, it created others.

"You see, I went straight from the docks in Liverpool to Scotland, and from Scotland to Lamborough. This is the first time in all my life — oh, what 's that?" She stared out of the window. Through a gap in the huddle of suburban dwellings and factories, looming dark against the deep-blue dusk of evening, a blade of pallid light pointed upward to something invisible in the sky. "What is that?" the overseas voice asked, awestruck. While she spoke, the giant shaft moved a little and then stopped. It seemed, human-wise, to reconsider. Another bolder shaft shot up beyond it, seeming to say: "This way! Have at them, brother!" The doubtful one quivered, and flashed upward, only to be hidden as the train rushed on into the intervening immensity which was London.

"The new searchlights," Madge remarked in a dry tone. "Rum if we should come in for a Zeppelin raid!"

"How dim it is in London!" Nan said, as she stepped out of the railway carriage. "There must be a fog."

"No. They keep the lights low these days."

On the opposite side of the platform another train, a very long one, was discharging its passengers. Most of these people, with untidy hair and sleep-defrauded eyes, were dressed in stained and tumbled odds and ends. Some were in working-clothes; women in great aprons, many carrying babies; little children holding to their skirts; and nearly every soul in the motley company, even the children, had one or more bundles, bags, or boxes in their hands. They were like people who had been waked suddenly out of a nightmare and told to run for the train. They seemed not to see the prosaic sights of the platform. The look of nightmare was still in their eyes. A middle-aged woman and an old man stood clinging together. The saddest immigrant ever landed in the New World had not shown a face like these.

"Where do they come from?" Nan was looking nearly as bewildered as the foreign-speaking horde.

"They come from Belgium," Napier said.

Singleton was waiting to hand Nan and Miss Greta into his cab.

"*Non! non!*" a high, agitated voice said in passing, "*les Allemands n'ont pas dépassé la ligne Ostende-Menin!*"

Out in the street newsboys were crying an extra: "Great battle raging! *Arrival of Canadian Troops!*"

CHAPTER XVII

ABOUT noon the next day a couple of porters stood waiting for the service-lift at the Royal Palace hotel. Each man had a sole-leather trunk on his shoulder, a trunk so new that the initialing "G. V. S." was still wet. It was something else which halted Napier in the act of sending up his card to Miss Ellis, a glimpse of Singleton's face behind an outspread newspaper.

"Cabs full of stuff keep coming," was the gentleman's *sotto voce* comment.

Napier wondered drily that anybody should expect to get the stuff out of England.

"Personal wardrobe. Member of household of cabinet minister. Special privileges. And nobody knows better that avoidance of publicity is worth thousands of pounds to Sir William and, I daresay, to the Government. She's playing it for all she's worth. She's got this Mr. Julian Grant in her pocket, too. He's up with her now."

The lift came down with Nan. She made a little hurried bow, and was for escaping. Napier stood there in front of her.

"Just a minute."

"I can't; I'm sorry. I haven't *got* a minute."

"Yes, you have," he said bitterly, "when I tell you it's about Miss Greta's affairs."

"Oh, about Greta —"

The face was whiter, more transparent, than he had ever seen it.

"You don't look as if you 'd had a wink of sleep."

Although Singleton had vanished, Nan showed little disposition to linger. As Napier stood there, looking down at the face alight with fidelity and eager service, he knew in his soul he was thankful there was n't time, nor this the place, to wring her heart with the disgraceful truth about her friend. The last thing he expected to say was the first to come out.

"A . . . you don't gather, I suppose, that Miss Greta is at all harassed about money?"

"It is kind of you to think that!" She smiled at him. "The fact is, Greta — that is, I *did* cable home last night. I am going back to the bank now, to see if they 've heard."

Napier arrested her slight movement. "Just let me understand. Do you mean that you 've overdrawn your account?"

"Oh, not overdrawn. But the gold I got this morning just finished it. I seem to have needed a good deal of money lately, one way and another."

"You got gold this morning, you say?"

"Yes; was n't it lucky? Greta has a prejudice against paper money. She thinks it unsanitary."

"Oh, I see. And you were able to give her all she needs — of the sanitary sort?"

"No. I could get only sixty pounds."

"Not in gold?"

"Forty in sovereigns, twenty in half-sovereigns."

"You were uncommon lucky; but Miss Greta will have

to give you back that sixty pounds, or the inspector will take it away at the station."

"Oh, surely not!"

"Beyond a doubt. They don't allow more than twenty pounds to be taken out of the country, and that must n't be in gold."

She stared. "What do people do who have hundreds of pounds in your banks?"

"They have to leave it behind till the end of the war."

"Not Americans?"

Nobody, he said significantly, would be allowed to carry English gold to Germany.

Gravely, for a moment, she considered the astonishing statement.

"Heavens, the time!" Her eyes over his shoulder had found the clock.

"Only a little after twelve." He did n't stir from the stand he 'd taken in front of her.

"You don't realize how much there is to do," she pleaded. Then, as he stood there so immovable, she made the best of it. "I believe, after all, I 'll tell you."

"Better," he agreed.

"Well, only half an hour ago we decided Greta could n't go alone. I 'm going with her."

All his life he would remember what he went through in those next seconds.

"Julian,"— she threw in with a hurried glance at Napier's face —"Julian thinks it will be all right."

"You imagine you 'll be allowed to go?" Napier said, with infinitely more firmness than he felt.

"Who would try to prevent?"

"Will you please, sir, come up to seventy-two?"

He heard Julian's high voice through the closed door, and as it was opened, "All that does n't matter a straw," he was shouting impatiently into the receiver. "Those regulations, you know as well as I do, can be set aside for the special case. I *know* she 'll have to have a passport. You 've got to tell the fella at the American Embassy. What? Look here, Tommy, you don't understand. I 'll be round before you go to luncheon."

Napier had made his way among cardboard boxes and clothes-encumbered chairs, to the sofa where Miss Greta half sat, half lay, in a becoming mauve tea-gown. She gave him her hand.

"Hello!" said Julian, already looking up a new telephone number.

Madge came out of the adjoining bedroom, dragging an enormous brown-paper parcel along the floor. "Did you know Nan had got you the sealskin coat? How do, Mr. Gavan. It 's a love of a coat. You 'll wear it, won't you?"

"No; pack it," said Miss Greta, indifferently.

"But on the boat, Miss Greta. You 'll want some warm —"

"I 've *got* a coat," she said impatiently. "Take that thing back where you found it."

"I say,"— Julian jumped up to lend a hand —"I did n't know you 'd come back, Madge. I might as well go now and see about the passport. What 's this?"

"Can't imagine. That 's why I brought it in." Between Madge and her unskilful assistant, the cord round

the great bundle, already loose, came off. The contents bulged. Julian picked the unwieldy thing up in his arms, and a fold of heavy fur oozed out. And then the whole thing had half slithered out of his hold and fell along the floor.

"Lawks!" remarked Madge, with wide eyes on the superb black-fox rug, beaver-lined.

"Too heavy for anything but a Russian sledge," Julian objected.

"Well, *will* you take it back in there, and put it in the canvas hold-all!" Miss Greta settled back wearily against the ulster, as Madge and Julian struggled into the next room with the rug between them. "I understood Madge was going to bring the maid to do the packing," Miss Greta murmured discontentedly.

Napier leaned forward.

"Do you approve this plan of Miss Ellis going to Germany?" he asked.

"I can easily believe you don't approve it," she said with a gleam of *Schadenfreude*.

"I do more than disapprove," he answered under his breath. "I am going to prevent it."

"Oh? And how do you propose to do that?"

"I had meant to put a spoke in the passport wheel. But there 's a better — a shorter way."

"Oh?"

He leaned nearer. "I have done my part to prevent Miss Ellis's knowing"— Greta raised her china-blue eyes —"the things some of the rest of us know."

"You are very considerate — of Miss Ellis."

"Exactly. I am too considerate of her to let her even

apply for a passport without my first of all — enlightening her before you leave."

"Ah,"— she drew in her breath —"you *would,* would you?"

Napier was aware of having to brace himself to meet the unexpected dart of malignity out of the round eyes. But it passed — taking in the open door of the bedroom as it dropped. And in its place came pure scorn, controlled, intensely quiet, as she inquired in her society manner: "And you think Nan would believe you? You suppose for one moment that your word would stand any chance against mine?"

Napier concealed his harrowing doubt on this head. "I am to understand, then, you are willing that the facts we have been at pains to suppress should be known? Very well. I 'll begin by enlightening Mr. Grant and saving him the trouble of seeing about the passport." He caught the sudden shift of focus in the china-blue eyes. "That 's what I came up for," Napier added.

There was silence for an instant, except for the talk floating in through the open door: "No, let 's fold it in three. I 'll show you."

Was it the threat to enlighten Julian which had given her pause? "We have Singleton downstairs,"— Napier quietly suggested witnesses for the convincing of Mr. Grant —"and Grindley up."

"As if I did n't know!"

"Then you must know, too, that we are none of us making this experience harder for you than is necessary. But"— their eyes met —"we are not going to let you take that girl along."

"Could n't live without her, eh?" she burst out. For the first time in Napier's experience of her there was a common tang in her tone.

He rose to his feet. "Simply, she is not going with you. I thought you might prefer to decide this yourself, or to tell her you have ascertained that the passport difficulty is insuperable; anything you like." She sat looking down on the film of handkerchief held affectedly in the thick, white hand. There was no sign of anxiety or haste in either her face or her weary attitude. "The alternative," Napier went on in a quick undertone, "is that she will be staying behind with full knowledge of all that we have up to now kept back."

She turned to him with smothered vehemence. "It never was my *plan* to take her. I don't know what on earth I'd do with her."

Napier repressed the jubilation crying out in his heart. "The question, as I say, is merely, will you give her up after struggle and exposure or will you do it quietly?"

She seemed to make a rapid calculation. "If I agree to this, will you promise that she shall never know what I 've gone through, this last twenty-four hours?" The handkerchief went to her lips.

"No," said Napier, sternly, "but I 'll promise that I won't enlighten her before you leave."

"And Mr. Grant? If you tell *him,* you may as well tell every one. He could n't keep anything to save his neck."

"If *you* keep to the course I 've laid down, I don't know any special reason for enlightening Mr. Grant." Napier knew that he was showing weakness over the point. Yet,

after all, in a few hours the woman would be out of the country. Behind that wall of the German lines she would be lost.

By the time Julian returned to the sitting-room, Miss Greta had accepted the inevitable.

"I don't want to seem rude,"— she turned to Napier with her weary grace—"but I think I must ask to be left alone awhile. Perhaps you 'll be so *very* kind as to explain to Mr. Grant that in these circumstances of family affliction"— only Napier recognized the Adelphi touch in the phrase and in the lace-bordered handkerchief pressed to heroic lips —"the more I think of it, the more I feel it would be best for me to go home alone."

Napier went back to the hotel at five o'clock with Julian, who drove his own big car to take the three to the station. The progress was slow and penitential, for Miss Greta declined to lose sight of the two taxis which followed with the luggage. Napier, with Madge at his side, sitting opposite Nan and Miss Greta, found himself taking refuge from the unconscious reproach in Nan's face by studying the buttons on Miss Greta's ulster. There was a great many of those buttons. The immense labor of changing them induced thoughtfulness. They were thicker, but were n't the bigger ones exactly sovereign size? The smaller on collar, cuffs, and pocket-flaps — were n't they precisely of half-sovereign dimensions, excepting, again in thickness? He began to count . . .

"Look at that shop!" Nan leaned forward over the long narrow cardboard box she was carrying.

The front glass was smashed, the place empty. Over the door was a sign, "Zimmerman, Family Baker." A

little way on stood yet another shop with demolished front. On the opposite side was a third. There were seven in all, over each a German name.

Nan looked away. Miss Greta seemed not to have heard the exclamation, seemed to see nothing.

Some recruits for the army came lumping along, out of step, a sorry enough crew, pasty-faced, undersized, in ill-fitting, shabby, civilian clothes.

The china-blue eyes that had "gone blind" in front of raided German shops were full of vision before this mockery of militarism. As she looked out upon the human refuse for which war had found a use at last, the subtle pity in Miss Greta's face asked as plain as words, "What chance have these poor deluded 'volunteers' against the well-drilled German, fed and fashioned for war?"

The station at last! As Napier helped Miss Greta out, the front of her ulster swung heavily against his leg. "Sovereigns!" he said to himself.

The station was already densely crowded. While Napier and Madge mounted guard over Behemoth and the lesser luggage, Julian and Nan, with Miss Greta between them, disappeared in the crush.

When the reconnoitering party reappeared, Singleton was with them, porters at his beck, in his hand Miss Greta's ticket, passport, and German and Dutch money to the value of twenty pounds. He met the chief inspector as if by appointment, near the luggage, that loomed so important by contrast with that of other travelers.

To Miss Greta — although in her ugly ulster she looked less a person of consequence than she might — was plainly

accorded a special consideration. Mr. Singleton was there to see to that. He could not, to be sure, prevent some respectful interrogation as to the money, etc., she was taking out of the country, some perfunctory examination of luggage.

The only anxious face in the group was Nan's. Miss Greta, calm as a May morning, her round eyes trustingly raised to the inspector's face, with eighty to ninety pounds in English gold on her coat, and how much more elsewhere who should say, offering her purse and keys. "One is an American lock. I may have to help you with that," she said sweetly.

Napier half-turned his back on them, but he stood so that he could keep an eye on the stricken face above the long cardboard box which Nan was carrying as if it were an infant. Through the din Greta's innocent accents reached him. "Nobody ever told me! Oh, dear, my poor little savings!" When Nan turned her tear-filled eyes away from the group about Behemoth, Napier joined her.

"What shall you do after — after she is gone?" he asked.

"I have n't an idea beyond going back to the hotel to wait for my cable from home." She made a diversion of opening the long cardboard box and taking out six glorious roses tied with leaf-green and rose-colored ribbon. But she held the flowers absently.

"I shall be at my chambers. If I can be of any —"

"Oh, thank you. I sha n't need anything."

When Napier faced round again, Greta was smiling gently on the melted inspector. Perhaps that functionary

would n't have "forgotten" to confiscate the few pieces of gold so frankly shown had he known they were the mere residue left over from the lady's midnight activities.

They found themselves on the platform with, unhappily, time still to spare. Singleton made polite conversation with Miss Greta, abetted by Julian and Madge — who was taking the approaching parting with astonishing composure. A lesson to poor Nan who could n't keep the tears out of her eyes. Her effort to smile very nearly cost both her and Napier their self-possession. She went abruptly away from him, and stood dumb behind Greta at Julian's side.

"Take your places!"

A whistle blew. Miss Greta was shaking hands with Singleton. "Thank you *so* much. You *have* been kind." Her good-by to Julian and to Napier were quieter, but entirely cordial. She embraced Madge with dramatic fervor. "My darling child! We 'll never forget —"

Nan stood, the tears running down her cheeks unchecked, and probably unaware. A little apart she stood, all her sympathy, her very soul, flowing out as a final offering. "Good-by, my Nanchen!" Miss Greta kissed her on both cheeks. "You 'll write me? And you won't forget me?"

Nan was far past power of words. She thrust the roses toward Greta with a look that made Napier himself feel he could fall to crying. Even Miss Greta seemed touched by some final compunction. The carriage-door had no sooner slammed on her than she turned suddenly as if she had forgotten something. "Nanchen!" she leaned out and took the girl's face in her two hands. She bent and

whispered. The guards shouted. The train began to move.

"Oh, will you? *Will* you, Greta?" Nan was running along the platform with upturned face.

Miss Greta leaned far out, giving a flutter of white to the wind and leaving a smile for memory.

Thank God! Napier breathed an inward prayer. She can't do any more harm here.

Nan stood staring at the last coaches. Napier touched her arm. "Well?" he said gently.

"I *ought n't* to be miserable," she wiped her wet cheeks. "To have Greta soon to help me to bear things — ought to make it possible to bear them now."

"You are still counting on her help?"

She nodded, "I 'm to hold myself ready."

"Ready for what?"

"To join her. I shall pack my trunk to-night."

At the tail of the dispersing crowd, they were following Julian and Madge down the platform. Napier slowed his pace, looking down at the face beside him. Weeks, months, of passionate, fruitless waiting — no! "I promised her," he said,—"the lady we 've just seen the last of — that I would n't enlighten you about her true character till she was gone. You won't feel so badly at losing her when you hear what we know about Miss von Schwarzen —"

"Oh, oh!" Nan stood quite still an instant. "I thought Greta did you an injustice! You — you disappoint me horribly." She fled on to catch up the others.

After all, what was the use of quarreling about a woman who was out of the Saga? In a little while Nan would be able to bear the truth. Not yet, it was too soon.

Julian was to take her back to the hotel; and that was n't the worst. Napier could n't even go away by himself. He knew he ought to see Madge to Lowndes Square, where the McIntyre motor and maid were to call at seven o'clock for the purpose of conveying the young lady to Lamborough. It was, at all events, something to be thankful for that Madge was n't howling. So far as Napier had observed, she had n't shed a tear. This was n't the first occasion upon which Madge's late self-possession had vaguely puzzled Napier.

The drive back to Lamborough was a silent one, except for that extraordinary five minutes or so, after Madge had turned to say, "I wish Nan had come back with us, don't you?"

"Yes," he said, "I wish she had."

"I begged her to. I said, 'What shall you do at that hotel?' and she said she hardly knew yet. She 'd see. Rotten arrangement, I call it."

Napier smiled down at the girl. It occurred to him she was looking tired, too. And she had n't cried a tear that Napier had seen. "You seem to be getting on better with our American friend," he said, teasing. "Stood it like a Spartan, even when you thought she was going to Germany with Miss Greta."

"Well, I thought Miss Greta needed *some*body."

"But did n't you want the somebody to be *you?*"

"No."

He looked at her again. "I suppose you 're expecting to have Miss Greta back after the war."

"No," she said again, looking straight in front of her. The thought of the solicitude of her parents to keep the

dear child in the dark, suddenly flashed over him, along with the conviction, Madge knows!

Was it possible she accepted Greta's guilt? He could n't make it out at all. "Were n't you sorry to see her go?"

"It was horrid," she admitted. After a few seconds she found a steadier voice in which to say, "It 's been pretty horrid anyway, you know. We could prevent people from saying things, but we could n't prevent them from looking things. They *wanted* her to be a disgusting spy. They hated her worse for not being."

"Why don't you want her back when the war is over?"

She drew her red eyebrows together in a frown. "I expect," she said slowly, "it will be best for Germans to stay at home."

Napier laughed, but he felt sorry, in a way, to see Wildfire growing so sage. Evidently she had gone through a great deal in these weeks, a great deal of which she had given no sign. Behind her homesickness for her idol, Napier detected a great relief at the idol's being out of the way of suspicion and misprizing.

"That was why I wanted so to go and see her off. To try to make up a little; to do everything we *could* do just because I felt there 'd never be any other chance." The tears came at last. "She *was* nice, was n't she, Mr. Gavan?"

"She was wonderful." And before they fell back into that silence that lasted till they reached Lamborough, he asked, "How long have you known, Meggy?"

"Been sure only since yesterday — those men, what they did to her room."

There was good stuff in the McIntyre child, he said to himself. The part she 'd played would n't have shamed Napier or even a Nicholson Grant.

There was nobody about to receive them on their return. When Madge had gone up to her mother, Napier took his way down the hall to Sir William's room. But he caught sight of him through the open door of the drawing-room at the far end. Sir William sat reading. That was natural enough, and he was sitting in his own chair. But as far away as Napier could see his chief, he was vaguely aware of something odd about the figure that was, or should be, so intimately familiar. It was n't merely that Sir William did not instantly rise to his feet, seal-jingling, and call out, "Evening paper? Anything new about —" The first impression was of a man smaller than Napier had realized Sir William to be. Or had he — Napier half smiled at the grotesque idea — had he shrunken in these last hours? The great chair Miss Greta had fetched for him from Kirklamont certainly did seem ludicrously too big for a being so diminished, not only in body, but in spirit. His quick turns and vivid ways — what, Napier wondered with a dreamlike feeling as he walked down the room, had happened to all the familiar, foolish, endearing oddities? For an instant the thought thrust shrewdly, Is he dead? No, he moved.

"Well, sir, we have done your commission."

Like the action of a wooden automaton, one short-fingered hand was pushed out toward the reading-desk. It seemed to point to the small phial that lay on the ledge of the rack; the phial he had carried in his pocket for months

now as precaution in the event of an attack of angina. But Sir William's eyes were not on the phial. They were fixed on an open telegram.

And it was that telegram Sir William had sat reading. For how long?

The telegram regretted to inform him that his son, Captain Colin McIntyre, while bravely leading his battalion, had been killed in action.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHATEVER it was she had heard or not heard from Germany, Nan presently unpacked her trunk and installed herself in a flat in Westminster, with a servant, two aged Belgian refugee women, and the grandson of one of them, a little boy of five.

That for some time was the extent of Napier's knowledge of what was going on.

For the rest of that bewildering, tormenting autumn he had, with one or two exceptions, only fleeting and infrequent glimpses of the girl. And this in spite of the fact that she and Madge had set up an intimate friendship. Until a certain day in December, the two were often together both at the Lowndes Square house and at Nan's flat. The Belgian women, Napier gathered, were a sore trial. But that is another story.

Napier knew quite well he had n't his lack of sympathy with her Belgian complications to thank for the sense of *gêne,* of being on new and uncertain ground in such encounters with Nan as the times permitted. Was it because she knew, and resented, his having prevented her going to Germany in Greta's wake? Or was it because some inkling had reached her as to the rifling of Greta's room at Lamborough? Madge could n't have resisted the temptation to tell Nan the whole story by now. And why should Napier alone keep silence? Why, anyway, keep

up this fiction of Greta's impeccability? "I 'll have it out with Nan at the very first opportunity!"

Napier was almost happy, for a time, anticipating his first opportunity.

It came after a highly uncomfortable luncheon at Lowndes Square, the occasion of Julian's last appearance in that house where, ever since boyhood, he had been so welcome.

Ten minutes after the older people had sat down, Madge came in, bringing Julian and Nan Ellis. The girls wore that look of happy responsibility that had begun to shine on young faces in England.

"I 've joined the Emergency Corps," Madge announced.

"Your new excuse for being late for meals," Sir William exclaimed, with a *brusquerie* intended to strike a few enlivening sparks out of Wildfire. And she actually let it pass.

Lady McIntyre, in her fashionable mourning, more shrunken and piteous than ever, went on addressing to Julian her polite inanities, couched for the most part in that form of acknowledged intellectual poverty, the question. How many more months did Julian think this dreadful war was going to last? "They" could n't get home by Christmas now, *could* they? Was n't it wicked, after *promising?* And what did Julian think about the letters in the papers about possible air raids?

"Wildest folly ever talked!" Sir William interjected.

"It 's true," said Lady McIntyre, hopefully. "William has never believed there 's the least chance of a Zeppelin reaching England."

"As much as your descending on Berlin out of a parachute. To insure against air raids is to waste money and cocker up the Germans."

"Do you think so, too?" Lady McIntyre fixed her blue eyes on Julian Grant's face. "Do you know, in spite of what William says, *I* can't help feeling that every one who goes out at night in these dreadful times ought to take precautions." As no one responded, she strengthened her point. "I hear the streets grow darker and darker. Every night — yes, every single night — people are run over. The only way is for everybody who goes out at night to insure themselves."

Nobody seemed to have the heart to disturb her apparent belief that to insure against accident meant that a stop would be put to these regrettable affairs.

"All this talk in the papers," Sir William went on, "is pure concession to panic. Like the nonsense about what the submarines might do. Nothing could suit Germany's book better."

"Except, I suppose, sinking our ships." For the first time Julian took some interest in the conversation.

"Sinking our ships!" quavered Lady McIntyre.

"I should have thought the loss of the *Aboukir* and *Cressy* (those awful casualty-lists!) might have made people a little less ready to talk about our invulnerable Navy."

"So,"— Sir William laid down his knife and fork and fell to seal-rattling under the table —"so you 've come now to doubt the power of the British Navy!"

"I 've come," said Julian, "to see the danger of not doubting it."

The seals joined the general silence.

"I wonder," Sir William remarked dryly, "what your father would say to your views."

"I could tell you, sir, if it mattered."

"If it mattered! God bless my soul!" Sir William looked at Julian for the first time with cold dislike.

After luncheon the younger members of the party still hung aimlessly about the table in the hall, while Sir William and Lady McIntyre opened the letters brought by the latest post.

Napier tried in vain, by any of the unmarked means, to detach Nan from the others. Finally he said, with less indirectness than he often permitted himself, "I never see you now. Are you still too devoured by the Belgian locusts to have anything left for your older — friends?"

"Locusts! How *can* you? I am not at all devoured. Or, if I am, it's by something *quite* different." She said it with her air of new importance.

"But in the midst of it all,"— she lowered her voice and spoke now as one positively beset by weighty affairs — "I keep worrying about Julian. Just because,"— she glanced back at him as he stood talking "Emergency Corps" with Madge —"just because he does n't in the least worry about himself. Have you heard about the way his relations are behaving?"

"No," said Napier, disingenuously. "How are they behaving?"

"Simply abominably. Some of his friends, too. They cold-shoulder him in private; and in public — they cut him!" Her eyes gleamed with anger. "If they think

that 's the way to discourage Julian, they know very little!"

"I wish some one would discourage him from rubbing my old man the wrong way."

"He does n't mean to," she said, with a proprietary air that haunted Gavan afterwards, "but, you see, Sir William and Julian approach everything from opposite poles."

Behind his soreness and annoyance, Napier was secretly amused at "the child's judicial air," as he characterized it to himself. "At opposite poles, are they? It would be interesting to know what they were — those 'poles.'"

"Oh, you think I don't know? Well, I do. Sir William's idea of the problem of government is the same as his idea of the problem of the individual. To acquire. Julian's is to apportion. To administer."

"Who told you all that?" he inquired gently.

She reddened. "You can't say it is n't so. To take care of other people's interests," repeated the parrot, "is the only way to take care of your own."

"Does Julian find the axiom work in his case?"

She reflected a trifle anxiously. "You 've heard then?"

"Heard —?"

"His father has cut down Julian's income."

No, Napier had n't heard that, but he was n't surprised. Nan looked at him, indignant.

"You are n't surprised? You take it as a matter of course!" She turned away her head as she said, "Oh! I wish I could just once see his mother —" She stopped short. After considering an instant, "You could n't manage it, I suppose?"

No, *that* was n't a thing Napier could manage. He positively welcomed the exclamation from Lady McIntyre which cut the colloquy short.

"Another — *upon* my word!" An envelope fluttered to the waste-paper basket. She held an open paper in her hand.

"Another what, mum?" Madge left Julian to lean over her mother's shoulder. "Oh!" One glance was enough for Madge. She turned away. But one glance did n't suffice for Lady McIntyre. "It 's too, *too* much!" She went over to Sir William, who had withdrawn with his letters to the window. They stood talking in lowered voices.

Nan's inquiring look met Madge's offhand explanation: "Another of Greta's bills. That makes £160, just for furs."

"Oh!" Nan stood up, then, in an access of shyness, "Just go and ask your mother to let me have it."

"No good!" Wildfire shook her mane. "She won't. She thinks you 've had enough of 'em sent direct to you."

"Your mother does n't understand. It 's all right. I 'm taking care of these things for Greta."

"Have you had another letter?" Wildfire demanded.

"No. I told you she 's nursing her father day and night. She has n't time to; besides, it 's understood."

"Why do some of the bills come to us and some to you?"

Nan stood nonplussed an instant and then said:

"It 's all right, I tell you."

"You mean you think she 's going to pay you back?"

"Well, of course." Nan crossed the room and stood a moment in front of Lady McIntyre, with hand extended and speaking in an undertone.

"You may take it from me"— Sir William didn't moderate his tone —"Miss von Schwarzenberg *won't* pay the money back." His voice rose higher over the low protest. "For one thing, she can't."

"You think she hasn't got it?" Nan inquired.

"Oh, I haven't much doubt she's *got* it; but even if she wanted to repay you, she won't be allowed to send money out of Germany."

"Surely she'll be allowed to pay her debts?"

"Miss Greta would tell you, 'No trading allowed with the enemy.'" Sir William dismissed the matter with decision.

"You hear that, Julian? Not *allowed* to pay her debts!"

Nan's instinctive turning to Julian for sympathy and understanding was no more lost on Napier than Julian's comment, "There's no end to the little wickednesses of war as well as the great central one." He threw down the illustrated paper he'd been glancing at and took his hat. "Come along," he said to Nan under his breath. "Let's get out of this."

"Good-by." She held out her hand to Napier as he stood looking at the paper Sir William had given him. "*I'm* sure, if you aren't, Greta didn't know that horrid new rule."

"Good-by," was all Napier said.

"Of course she didn't know!" Julian atoned for the

other's omission. "Come," he repeated impatiently, as Nan stood saying last things to Madge. "They're expecting us."

She started. "Expecting me too?"

"Yes, expecting you."

The girl glowed. No more urging needed.

Napier had, even then, a fairly shrewd idea of who was expecting them. And he had let her go without asking her the question he meant to ask! Was it worth while, after all? Was n't it enough to know that since Greta von Schwarzenberg had left bills for furs, and trunks, and clothing to be paid for by her friends, she would inevitably leave a still heavier account to be paid for by her enemy? Napier "paid" every time he met Nan Ellis, and he knew he paid.

A deep disheartenment laid hold of him. His only escape from it was work. Enough of that and to spare. He had difficulty in finding time for drill, even at "the oddest hours"—odd for a young gentleman of his habits. Yet for the work that lay closest to his heart odd hours were all that Gavan had. This came about partly by reason of Sir William's increased need for, and increased dependence on, his secretary, partly because of his impatience with the desire of men like Gavan to join their university corps, or some other O. T. C. "and waste their time playing at soldiers." It was no good for Gavan to remind Sir William of the lack of officers to fill the gaps abroad, and the lack of instructors at home. "By the time you 'd be able to instruct anybody the war 'll be over!"

And still Gavan managed double duty during the last

weeks of the fateful old year and the early days of the problematic new. The thoughts of people at home, after following day by day, hour by hour, the bloody November struggle for Ypres, settled now on those survivors who were making their first acquaintance with the stark misery of winter in the trenches. It stood to reason this sort of thing *could n't* go on.

The next thing would be peace.

Those who believed in Kitchener agreed that no man as shrewd as K. of K. had ever made a prophecy so absurd on the face of it as that alleged dictum of his, "The war will last three years." The only way of understanding it was to interpret it as a recruiting call, and a final flourish in the face of the Teuton. K. of K. must have 100,000 men. Have 'em at once, too. Let the Germans put *that* in their pipes and smoke it!

Meanwhile the Germans were struggling for Calais and bombarding Rheims, and over on the other side of the world President Wilson talked peace.

Napier watched the gradual khaki-ing that came over the male population of the United Kingdom; watched regiments marching by day to the tune of "Tipperary," marching by night very quietly, on each man's shoulder a long white bundle, like little canvas bolsters — men on their way to entrain for the front, following in the wake of that fourth of the Expeditionary Army which had already fallen. With as little publicity as possible, hospitals multiplied. People began to look upon wounded soldiers in the streets without that shuddering, first passion of pity, that mingled gratitude and anger at the price exacted of those maimed men. "The price of our present, and our chil-

dren's future safety," said the many. "The price of our past blundering," said the few. Of these, Julian, in season and out of season, rubbed in the unwelcome truth.

Napier was seeing nearly as little in these days of Julian as of Nan. They had had high words over the development and intensification of Julian's opposition to the war, and in particular over his strictures on the Government. Napier had studiously avoided all reference to Nan Ellis. Such efforts as had been possible to keep in touch with her were mainly unsuccessful. He had a minimum of time he could call his own, and she apparently had none at all. She was never at the little flat in Westminster except late at night, and she was seldom in Lowndes Square. Madge, too, resented this preoccupation on the part of her new ally. "Oh, don't ask *me* where she is. Gone to see some of Mr. Grant's queer friends, I suppose."

By this side wind and that, he gathered that Nan was being swept into the little pacifico-philosophic group and was thick as thieves with certain men and women whose names were beginning to be anathema to the general public. Gradually, in Napier's mind, the conviction tightened. If something is n't done, they 'll not only have made a convert of that girl, they 'll be making use of her — some use or other, God knew what! — for their nefarious ends.

Instead of Julian's protecting her, he 'd likely as not do the other thing. All from the loftiest motives!

And upon that, Napier's first motion of enmity toward the man who had been his closest friend. Strangely to his own sense, with far more bitterness than he resented Ju-

lian's notorious anti-war work, Napier would, as he knew now, resent the harnessing of the airy spirit of the girl to that lumbering and ill-looked-on car.

What was to be done?

He had stood aside out of loyalty to his friend, who was also (as he reminded himself a thousand times) the first comer in the field. The field of private feeling. Yes. But there was no obligation upon Napier to stand aside while the girl he loved was swamped in a bog of disloyalty to the country, and of personal reprobation. Worse. Of personal danger.

No! he was n't going to look on at that and not raise a hand. The old struggle which he thought he had abandoned, wearing this new face, became possible once more. Possible? It became inevitable. For it had become a duty. So he told himself.

The trouble was that on the rare occasions when he was with her, something in the new post-Greta manner of the girl — an intangible but effectual barrier — so barred the way to even the beginning of renewed confidence, that Napier, over-worked, over-anxious, found the edge of his impulse turned. He would leave her, saying to himself, "I 'll have this out with Julian." And when he found himself with Julian for a few hasty minutes, "having it out" proved so baulked and inconclusive a business, "I must tackle Nan," Napier would say to himself.

Not that he failed altogether to tackle Julian, nor to tackle him on the admittedly burning questions: such as Julian's speech introducing a deputation to the Prime Minister, or that highly provocative letter assailing British pre-war diplomacy, the letter rejected by the "Times" and

"accepted, of course, by the dingiest radical rag in the kingdom."

"They are using you!" Napier had burst out.

"I am content to be used. I ask nothing better."

More quietly, more gravely, Napier agreed it was a thing about which a man must be his own judge. But *by so much* he must hesitate to judge for others. "The Pacifists are making a cat's-paw of you, I tell you. If you like that for yourself . . ." he shrugged. Then, abandoning his momentary return to the *laissez-aller* form of other days, he looked straight into Julian's eyes and with an earnestness that would have enlightened any one but Grant, "I don't know how you reconcile it to your conscience to involve a girl in such . . ." he broke off. As Julian stood waiting serenely: "A girl as young and as far away from home —"

"Nan! Oh, you don't know Nan!"

Another time: "Why drag her into — all this?" Gavan demanded. "It isn't as if she could do anything."

"Oh, can't she!"

"*What,* in the name of —"

Although Julian wouldn't answer, an opportunity came to put the question to Nan. Napier found himself sitting opposite her at dinner in Lowndes Square on the night following the House of Commons debate on German spies. That topic, in the forefront of every mind, was ignored by tacit consent. Conversation fell for a few memorable minutes on the appalling statement, just is-

sued officially, that there had been 57,000 casualties in the British Expeditionary Force up to the end of October. How many had fallen since in the bloody struggle about Ypres, fiercest of the war, and how many on either side would survive the stark misery of that first little-prepared-for winter in the trenches, no one present had heart to ask. But the question, urged in print and cried from platforms by Julian and his friends, was there in the girl's face.

Sir William seemed to answer by saying the one redeeming feature of the business was that it was too awful to last. The Germans must see they have failed.

"Why," the girl asked, with her candid eyes on her host, "if the Government believed that, why was Lord Kitchener calling for a hundred thousand men?"

"Oh, *that* — that was to show the Germans what they had to expect if they *did n't* come to their senses."

While the dessert was going round, she got up, with a look at the clock and an apology. It was understood that she had an engagement.

"Always an emergency in these days," Sir William mocked pleasantly at the Women's Corps. "Gavan, see they get her a taxi, will you?"

The footman's whistle grew fainter as Napier helped her into her coat. They had n't been alone since those hurried moments on the platform after Greta had gone. Something now in her slight awkwardness as she struggled with her coat, her increased anxiety to be off ("I ought to have gone ten minutes ago. I can always find a cab quicker than a footman") gave Napier a feeling that he had misinterpreted her avoidance. Not the new Greta-born distrust of him, but distrust of herself. His heart

rose at that quick conviction. Rogers would n't be long, he reassured her, and then: "I wish he might, or, rather, I wish I had n't to go back to the House with Sir William. I 'd take you wherever it is you are going." He stopped suddenly.

"Would you? Would you really? That 's what I 've been longing to ask. *You* would n't sit dumb, helpless, like me if once you 'd heard Julian —"

"I 'm under the impression that I *have* 'heard Julian.' "

"No! no! not just arguing with you. I mean at one of the meetings."

"I see. Where I can't answer back."

"And now you 're looking like that!" She turned away with nervous abruptness, but he had interposed between her and the doorknob.

"And you — have you any idea how unhappy *you* are looking?"

"Well, why not? — if it is, as Julian says, 'such a brute of a world.' "

"*Julian* ought n't to think so," Napier said bitterly. "Julian has you —"

"Oh, has he! Poor Julian!"

"Do you mean he has n't?" They were both trembling.

"I mean, whether he has or has n't, we are n't rid of the miserableness. Once you are started wrong, you can't get right, it seems. Not without —" Suddenly her eyes filled. A shower of words tumbled out in a shaken whisper: "At first — oh, for long, I thought you hardly knew I was there, at Kirklamont, in the world! Then, when you began to notice me, it was only to criticize me. Oh, I used to see you laughing; not with your mouth, with your

eyes. You laughed at Julian, too, for thinking I was all right." She broke in upon his protest, which was none the less horrified for being self-convicted.

"Yes, yes; you tried to prevent Julian from caring. I could have forgiven you that," she said, with her look of indignant candor; "yes, I could *easily* have forgiven you if you 'd done it from any *nice* reason, like jealousy. You *did n't* do it from a nice reason." Still under her breath, she hurled it at him.

"Hush! They might —" he glanced at the dining-room door.

"You thought I should n't 'do.' Julian — well, maybe you know what he thought. So I let him try to make up to me. He could n't, but I let him try. And what 's come out of it all is that Julian —"

"Yes, yes; I know, I know."

"I 've made him care! I 've made him build on me! And can't you see"— she seemed to arraign Napier's own loyalty as she stood there under the hall light, vehement, unhappy —"can't you see Julian needs his friends now as he never did before?" In the little pause her excitement mounted. "And besides that, Julian 's right about the war. And you are wrong. Oh, why *are* you!" she cried out of the aching that comes of conflict between love of a person and hate of his creed.

They heard a taxi stop. She caught up her gloves. "Do you know what I kept thinking at dinner? It 's what I always think when people talk like Sir William, about letting the war go on for Kitchener's three mortal years. I kept thinking that Julian won't ever come here again. And what a pity it was! Unless you — *do* come

and hear him, Gavan, with me! To-morrow afternoon. *Please!*"

"I 'd do most things for you," he said; "not that."

And then he went and did it. At least, he went alone.

Had the authorities not believed that outside the narrow — so narrow as to be negligible — limits of the League for a Negotiated Peace, no general notice would be taken of so unpopular an enterprise, the open-air meeting would have been interdicted. The authorities had not reflected that unpopularity, if only it is great enough, is as sure a draw as its opposite.

Napier left the taxi and let himself be carried along in the human current to a place opposite that part of the improvised platform where a speaker stood facing the people. The thick-set figure of the ex-member of Parliament stood in a storm of booing, of derisive shouts and groans that ultimately drowned his appeal.

No sooner had they howled him down than a much younger man stood up there facing the crowd. Julian. He spoke for a good twenty minutes. His boyishness, and that something of moral passion that compelled you to listen to Julian, held the people quiet through the earlier minutes, and held them muttering and threatening up to the bursting of the storm.

His voice reached Napier tired and hoarse:

"You don't believe the Germans were encircled in a band of iron? You don't believe they had n't sufficient outlet for their immense capacities? Oh, no; the commercial greed of other nations did n't hem them in! Tell me, then, what 's behind this vast discovery of German

activity in lands not their own? What about the difficulty even in England of combing them out of commerce, out of clubs, even out of Parliament? What about the hold they have in Sweden and Holland; in Genoa; in South America, not to speak of the United States? Now, notice. No other nation has so disseminated itself about the globe in practical activities. What 's the reason? Can you answer that? Wrong. The reason is that energy must go somewhere. The Germans were n't to have colonies; they were n't to have seaports, not openly. So they took them in the only way left. They took them by a vast, silent effort that has sown the German broadcast over the world."

Agreement as to that exploded in every direction. The speaker strained his voice to dominate the din:

"They did n't specially love us — the Germans. No; nor we them, perhaps."

He was forced to wait till the enthusiasm which greeted that view had spent itself.

"Now, just think a moment. The Germans — I 'm speaking of before the war, remember — they believed theirs was the only true civilization."

Wild derision from the English cockneys. The few soldiers scattered through the crowd appeared to have less emotion to expend than did the civilians. They listened stolidly. In the first lull the speaker went on:

"Now, why — why did these notorious home-lovers turn their backs on what for them was the only true civilization? Why did they come here in such numbers?"

"To spy!"

"To steal our jobs!"

"'Peaceful penetration' for the ends of war!"

"Listen! They overran us and other countries because we prevented the legitimate expansion of the German Empire."

High and clear over the confused shouting, "That's a lie!" a voice cried angrily. The direct charge acted like a stimulant. The word "lie" was caught up by a score of throats.

"An' why ain't *'e* at the front?"

Above the increasing disorder Napier caught fragments from the platform:

"Waste places of the earth, crying out for labor and development. Yes, in bitter *need* of something the German could give, *wanted* to give —"

But pandemonium had broken loose, and reigned irresistible for some moments. As the wave of sound ebbed, those high, fife-like notes, conquering hoarseness for a moment, soared above the din and over the bobbing heads of the multitude:

"*Waste* places! Yet we grudged even the waste places to that supremely hard-working people. Why?"

A hail of answers, every one a stone of scorn.

"As you don't seem to know why it was we grudged these places to the Germans, you'd better let me tell you. We grudged them to an industrious people because the people were n't British people. What happened? No! no! *no!* Listen! The Germans — the Germans —"

Cries of "Belgium!" mixed with booing and cursing, drowned the voice again and again till the moment when it rose with "they" in lieu of the word intolerable.

"They have done what you say. I 'm not here to deny

it. They 've turned the most fertile lands of Europe into wastes. Why? Because we refused them the places that were already waste. Energy must go somewhere. Energy that could have helped to save the world has gone to the devastation of Belgium, to the ruin of France. Gone to the torture and death of tens of thousands of British men. Whose fault? Ours, *ours,* I tell you!"

A roar went up as the crowd surged forward. Napier, carried with it, saw men near the foot of the platform gesticulating wildly with clenched fists above their heads: "Liar! Pro-German!"

And still the penny-whistle voice shrilled clear a moment over the turgid outpouring of muddy minds:

"The vast crime, the unparalleled lunacy of war! If I have a private quarrel and I kill my opponent, I am hanged for a felon. If the Government I live under has a public quarrel, and at their bidding I kill some man I never saw before, I am a patriot. *No!* I am a murderer."

That was more than the soldiers could stand. They joined in the rush for the column. Yet, as Napier remembered afterward, the soldiers who by implication had been called murderers were less like wild beasts in their fury than the men who had stayed at home. The men were n't in khaki who strove, vainly at the first essay, by dint of climbing on other men's shoulders, to storm the platform.

As for Napier, he would never have been able to get anywhere near the speaker but that his precipitation was taken by those about him for uncontrollable rage. Even with the aid of hatred to forge him a way, he found getting to the front a cursedly impeded business. Then came

that moment of sheer physical sickness at his closer vision of the pack of wolves ravening below the unfriended figure. Julian, facing the onset, facing the hate-inflamed eyes in heads just appearing above the platform; Julian still crying peace in that appalling loneliness which typified his yet greater loneliness in a nation and a time given up to war.

Ruffians with villainous faces, and simpletons fired with the responsibility of standing up for England, doing it so safely, too, by means of breaking the head of one young gentleman — up the platform they scrambled after their ringleaders and closed round the speaker.

In those last few hard-won yards Napier had collected a policeman. But above the attackers had fought Julian, to the edge of the platform. Napier had an instant's glimpse of him with a splash of scarlet down his face before they threw him over.

Upon that, a new emotion seized the crowd — a panic born of the consciousness of limits to police indifference. The mass swayed and broke away from where the figure had fallen. There were plenty of policemen, now that the need for their intervention was past.

Napier shouted to them for an ambulance, as he ran forward. Of the faces bent over the figure lying limp at the foot of the platform, one was lifted — Nan Ellis's.

"Wait!" Napier called to one of the policemen. "Get that lady out of this, will you?"

But the lady would come when she could take "him" along. "A taxi, please."

Some one had given her a large-sized pocket-handkerchief. She made a bandage and tied it round the bleed-

ing head. Some one else fetched a cab for the lady. And the ambulance would be there in a minute.

"Oh, he 'll hate the ambulance! Help me to get him to the cab!" she besought.

His eyelids opened, and he moaned a little as, between Napier and one of the policemen, Julian was carried through the alley which had been opened in the crowd. As the limp figure was borne past, they muttered and jeered.

"Oh, *hush!*" cried a voice. "Is n't it enough to have nearly killed him?" Nan's question cut its way through the muttering and hate; it startled the people into momentary silence. But when the little procession had gained the cab and were driving off, the anger of the disintegrated mob broke out afresh. The air was filled with cries, and for several hundred yards men and boys ran along by the taxi, shouting insult and imprecation through the window.

Napier looked out. Not one of those foul-mouthed pursuers wore khaki or sailor's blue.

That was something.

CHAPTER XIX

LATE that night Gavan left a note in Berkeley Street, to be given to Lady Grant in the morning. He told her that he had got a doctor and a nurse, and "Julian has come off better than I could have believed."

Before ten o'clock the next day Lady Grant appeared at her son's new lodging, with the avowed intention of taking him home and seeing that he was properly attended to. Julian, in a fever and many bandages, flatly refused to be moved. There was a grievous scene.

In the midst of it, in walked Miss Ellis. The same evening, comfortably established in his old Berkeley Street bedroom, Julian in a few faint sentences put Napier in possession of the issue of that encounter of the morning.

"Nan turned against me. She and my mother together are too many for me."

In those next days Gavan ran in whenever he had a quarter of an hour, to find a Julian very weak, yet in bewildering good spirits, visited daily by Nan, and even, for the term of the exigency, received back into his mother's favor.

"Do they meet, those two?" Arthur asked.

"My mother and Nan? Rather. They get along like a house afire."

If Napier had doubted that before, he doubted no longer after a little talk down in the drawing-room with Lady

Grant on a certain gloomy evening toward Christmas. Whispers had begun to be heard in privileged circles of British shell shortage at the Front. The Germans had shells to spare. They had been bombarding Scarborough, Hartlepool, and Whitby; five hundred casualties, the papers said.

In spite of all the evil news, Julian was better. You could read that in his mother's face.

"I believe he 'll be able to go over to America early in the new year," she said.

"To America!" Napier repeated, slightly dazed.

"It would be everything to have him out of England till the war is over." Julian's mother had broached the idea to Miss Nan. "I 've had my eye on that young woman. It 's true she takes Julian's mad ideas for the law and the prophets, but so a wife should. Julian might do worse, don't you agree?"

"Then — they 're engaged!" was all that Napier could bring out.

"Not properly engaged, I gather. But when was Julian properly anything? The girl 's no fool. She has naturally thought we should n't like it, so I took occasion to say a word to her. She looked rather confused," said the lady reflectively. "She *must* have been confused, for what do you think she said? That I had misunderstood. That she had never said she would marry Julian. I told her he was an odd creature, but I was sure that was what he wanted. 'And I can't be wrong in thinking you care for him,' I said. And then she burst out with: 'How can I *help* caring about anybody with such a perfectly beautiful nature as Julian!' Was n't that American?"

Lady Grant smiled. "I told her I would make Sir James see it as I did, and that it would all come right."

Julian's way of helping it all to "come right" was to employ his convalescence in carrying on the propaganda from his sick bed with unabated ardor; or, rather, an ardor increased by the excitement of its transmission largely through Nan Ellis.

That name of "Messenger" which Napier had secretly given her recurred to him again and again. Messenger, indeed! carrying contraband, not to say high explosive, to and from the sober precincts of Berkeley Street!

The worst of it was that Nan showed no sign of revolt against being made the agent of this traffic. The cold truth was that she liked it. That was the heart-breaking thing about the whole sorry business. She would come back from private talks with Julian's revolutionary friends, from semi-public meetings, electric with excitement, brimming with her news. Julian's eagerness to hear and hers to tell did not always await the more private hour.

Nan's air of tumbling it all out, equally without selective care and without consciousness of offense, did much to ease the situation between Julian and his mother. Their relationship had been too embittered to allow them any more to discuss these things. And here was some one wholly forgetting, if she had ever heard, that constraint-breeding, melancholy fact; some one who pronounced the words abhorred in an even, every-day voice, smiled the while, and sat at her ease. Too newly Julian had skirted death for his mother not to make shift to endure that which first brought back the hues and lights of life to the corpse-white face.

Lady Grant did, to be sure, tighten her lips and stiffen her back in face of some of the talk that went on across her son's paper-strewn bed-table.

During one of Napier's visits, he had seen her rise and leave the room. When she came back, she found Julian laughing as he had n't for many a day. Ultimately Lady Grant was able to confront the familiar mention of persons ostracized and implications outrageous with that patience women know how to draw upon in dealing with their sick.

Sometimes the messenger did n't spare the mixed audience in Berkeley Street a graver, more passionate mood.

"Mr. Lazenby was wonderful, talking about the awful casualty lists, and the way sheer hate is shriveling up men's minds. I do wish you 'd heard, Julian, what he said about America and what President Wilson might do for peace."

"By minding his own affairs and not interfering with our blockade? Yes." For once Lady Grant and her enemies were in accord.

"I told them," Nan went on, smiling at Julian, "that you said the President had the greatest opportunity in all history. 'Eggs-actly!'" she lifted and brought down her slim arm in accurate reproduction of Lazenby's sledge-hammer gesture: "'The President of the United States is the man to go for!' They had cheered that. '— The man with a more absolute power and a greater range of action that any ruler on the earth to-day!'"

"Just so!" Lady Grant's deep voice came down more quietly but hardly less heavy than Lazenby's hammer,

"— Raging socialists building all their hopes on the irresponsible Despot."

"Oh . . . Despots!" Miss Nan appeared to pass these gentlemen in mental review. "Do you know, they 've done something more outrageous than ever?"

Now we 'll have it, Gavan thought to himself. He had been conscious on this particular evening of an undercurrent of emotion in the smooth stream of the girl's talk — a peculiar shining in her eyes, that perplexed him. It certainly was n't happiness. She was for once keeping back something.

"I told you," she said suddenly to Julian, with that new intimacy which seemed to clear the room of other occupants, "I told you Mr. Oswin Norfolk's book was practically finished. Yes. Well, the authorities are n't going to let it be published."

"*What!*" Julian very nearly leaped out of bed. "Suppress the greatest contribution to sane thinking since 'Progress and Poverty'? To dare to ban the 'Philosophy of Force' and pretend we are fighting for liberty!"

"You ought not to have told him," Lady Grant reproached the girl.

Julian caught his mother up. "Not tell me? Of course she had to tell me. She knows if she did n't bring me the news here, I 'd have to go where I could depend on getting it."

His mother exchanged looks with Gavan.

"I told them what *I 'd* do." Nan said it with that little catch of excitement in her voice. "I 'd get Mr. Oswin Norfolk's book over to America. They would n't be afraid to publish it over there."

"Why should they? The *Americans* are n't standing in the breach," said Lady Grant, with heightened color.

Nan looked away. Her mouth quivered a little. It was clear that she was reminding herself, Julian's mother!

"America! The very thing!" In the baggy dressing-gown Julian had twisted the upper part of his thin body sidewise, leaning towards the messenger.

"The trouble is," she began in a lower voice, and then hesitated.

"What 's the matter?" His impatience made him irritable. "You are n't so silly as to suppose we can't say what we like before Gavan and my mother?"

"No, oh, no," she answered with a haste that convicted her. "I was just going to tell you Mr. Norfolk seems to think"— and for all Julian's assurance and her own acceptance of it, her voice sank —"the mails are n't safe."

"Not safe?"

She shook her head.

"Not any more. Mr. Norfolk says there 's a — a supervision already."

"What?"

"Oh, not openly."

"A secret censorship! Hah! Hear that?" he challenged his friend. "That 's what your policy 's come to!"

"What makes Norfolk think —" Gavan began at his calmest.

"He doesn't think. He knows." There was a little pause. "Things don't get through. And the things that don't get through, they 're always, he says, things of a certain kind." She broke the strain of the next few moments' silence. "I said if they did n't trust the mails

why should n't Mr. Norfolk take his book over along with your 'League of Nations Manifesto' that they 're all so wanting to get into President Wilson's hands. They asked me what I thought the inspectors would be doing while Mr. Norfolk was walking about with contraband literature under his arm. Did you ever hear such an excuse? I said: 'Do you think the inspectors would stop you? Well, the inspectors would n't stop *me!*' Yes," she added in a slightly offended tone, "they laughed, too. I did n't mind that so much as to see them accepting the — interference, and just sitting there. Talking! It made me wild. 'Do you really *want* to get that into the President's hands?' I asked them. 'Very well. You give it to me.'"

"You 'd take it!" The involuntary exclamation slipped over Gavan's lips.

Julian had n't needed to ask.

"You darling!" He held out his hand.

"Not at all," said Miss Nan, with flushed dignity. "And, anyhow, Mr. Norfolk won't trust me with his precious book. 'Let me take Mr. Grant's "Manifesto," then,' I said. But they seemed to think the 'Manifesto was still more what they called 'inflammable material at this juncture.' 'It would be better for you to be found with a bomb in your trunk,' they said."

"They are bound to consider the question of personal risk," said Arthur, seriously.

"*What* risk? Nobody can tell me that. I 'm an American. The British Government has n't any right to tell me what I may carry to my own country. Besides, they would n't find it. And suppose they did, the English

could n't shoot me. I told them this afternoon, '*I'm* not bound by your horrid war regulations.' But no," she said lugubriously through the others' smiling, "they won't send me. Everybody 's afraid."

"Except you and me, Nan." Julian held out a hand again, his eyes shining in his moved face. "It 's a great bond."

Gavan recognized the fact now, and all its implications, that Julian, with his pale halo of martyrdom, was able to draw closer to the girl than anybody else on her idealist side. Politics? She was n't thinking about the future of governments and the stamp to be set on civilization, Napier told himself. She was thinking that bayonet work was cruel and revolting. She was prepared to let the great ideals be bayonetted like the babies of the Belgian stories, rather than let the war go on!

The last time Gavan was ever to see those two together was one evening toward the end of January, about half-past six. Julian's convalescence, not so rapid as his mother expected, was steadily progressing. The newsboys, at that period still vocal in London streets, were shouting: "Zepp raid! Bombs dropped on King's Lynn!" as Gavan was admitted at the Grants' door. Nan was coming downstairs.

"And where are you off to this time?" He led her into Sir James's library. "I suppose I shall hear of you on the Nelson plinth next, being pelted."

She seemed not yet to have received that mandate. But again she was full of America, what America was to do for the war-maddened world, America and the labor parties everywhere.

Away from that slavery to sickroom sensibilities, Gavan could n't bear it. With a vehemence foreign to him, he poured out his indictment against a divided national policy, against the treason of weakening the home front. He flayed the stop-the-war people as though a prince of the peacemongers were n't lying in the room above. Their colossal ineptitude in thinking they alone really want peace! They had sent deputations to Sir William, who had just lost his second son!

"Not Niel! Oh, Gavan, Niel!"

"Yes, blown to atoms at Soissons."

"Niel! Niel, too!" she cried. "If only they had been able to stop it in time!"

"Stop it! Stop men from going into a war like this! I 'm not an idealist myself,"— he could n't, to save his life, keep bitterness out of his voice —"but I do know there have been men who went into this war to defend the weak and to right wrong. A good many of those men can't speak for themselves any longer —" For a moment even Gavan could n't speak for them. He began again in a level voice, "In those casualty-lists — nearly every friend I had."

"Not the greatest friend of all; not Julian."

"Except Julian," he said dully, "our lot is practically wiped out. And now the younger men, the boys, Niel and the rest. They go and they go." He turned on her with a vehemence that cloaked his emotion. "I 'm not saying that all the men out there feel the same about the war, but they fight on, some of them because — other men have died and must n't have died in vain. The dead are the

best recruiters. It 's the dead call the loudest, 'Come, join up!'"

The tears stood in her eyes, but she shook her head.

"The dead can't speak for themselves. I wish they could. Soldiers — people who 've been in it — are n't half so hot for going on with the struggle as a civilian like you."

"I 'm *not* a civilian. I 'm gazetted to the Scottish Borderers. This is the last time I 'll see you."

"Oh, Gavan!" She held up her shaking hands.

He longed to beg her forgiveness, to say he had n't meant in the very least to tell her like that; but all he could do was to explain, "The last, I mean, till I get my first leave," he ended in his most casual voice.

"Oh, Gavan!" she repeated. And then she turned abruptly and went out of the room. Left him standing there. Not even good-by.

It had been hard enough for Gavan to arrange it even before that awful news about Niel.

"You are n't fit," Sir William had stormed. When he calmed down a little, he went and had another talk with the doctor. No medical man who knew his business would pass Mr. Napier, Sir William was told; but the need for officers was great. Mr. Napier would have his way. In the final issue Sir William had his.

The very same evening of the interview with Nan this new thing had been sprung on Napier.

Something, Sir William said, that Gavan could do for the country that the country needed more than it needed

should he have noticed this one? Could n't make out till she turned her head with a backward look just as she disappeared. "And it was that woman who used to be at your house, Sir William; the governess."

Napier's heart failed him for one sick moment. To be leaving England at the very moment of Greta von Schwarzenberg's return! Tommy was asking Sir William why "a lady *like that*" should be coming back here in disguise. Surely there was something very fishy about it.

"Well, you say you 've reported to Scotland Yard. Let them deal with it!" Sir William rattled his seals impatiently.

Poor Tommy was having no success at all with his news. It was plain that Sir William was more annoyed at being made a participant than at the fact itself. Napier could n't refrain from warning him.

"She 'll be trying to get into communication with Miss Ellis — with Madge."

Tommy, more considerate, soothed Sir William.

"She won't risk that, whatever 's the explanation of her slinking back. She 'll lay low for a while, anyway." Tommy registered his conviction, "She saw I 'd recognized her, and did n't love me for it."

CHAPTER XX

A GOOD part of that last night in London, Napier spent in writing Nan a full account of the results of Singleton's visit to Lamborough. He wound up by warning her that Greta was in London, disguised as a Belgian refugee. Moreover, Scotland Yard would have full and accurate knowledge of those with whom the woman held any, even the slightest and most innocent, communication.

He sealed the letter and left it in the trusty keeping of his servant. The packet was not to go out of Day's hands except to be placed in those of Miss Ellis.

Napier's secret was well kept. His own family had so little idea of his change of plan that until he had cabled them from New York, they supposed him to have vanished, in the now familiar way, into the B. E. F.

Before ever the Atlantic liner left the docks, Napier's eyes, or rather, his ears, in the first instance, began to open. What they took in was the fact of the singular pervasiveness of the German tongue. On examining the speakers, they were seen to be men young or youngish and certainly *Kriegsfähig*. The stamp that the German system sets on the person who has been trained to military command differentiated certain of these foreign-speaking passengers from the ordinary reservist. There were at least four Germans of good military rank on board, no

doubt calling themselves "Americans returning to their American homes." Here was a chance to observe at short range one of the greatest difficulties of those days: how was England to safeguard herself without wounding the susceptibilities of a friendly, but officially neutral, nation?

As he shouldered a way among his alien enemies, that new, involuntary hatred of the Teuton accent may have played some part in the rapture with which his ears greeted a voice not English, indeed, yet sounding for him its special harmonies.

He turned with a leap of the heart toward the voice that floated up from the crowd pressing to the gangway, a voice that called out to a porter something about a "green suit-case." Looking down from the height of the tall ship, for all his hungry eagerness, he could n't see the face that went with that voice, nothing but hats: men's soft felts and hard bowlers; the feathers and ribbons of ladies' headgear. Then came a moment when, among them all, a little cap of brown came slowly up on its golden wings till it landed Nan Ellis on the deck.

This latest manifestation of the cap of magic produced in Napier's mind a medley of instinctive joy, an utter bewilderment, and that readiness of acceptance, apparently without effort or cost, with which we greet those strokes of fortune whose strangeness throws us back on the essential mystery through which the most commonplace of us daily threads his way.

Her first words in another mouth would have been an intolerable irony:

"So this is how you go to the Front!" He was glad of the quick flush that rose to ask his pardon.

"To accept the worst construction on my being here," he answered, smiling, "I am not the only shuttlecock."

She evaded the explanation of her own presence with a speech that even at the time struck Napier as being more odd than her apparition on board the *Britannia*.

"Forgive me for saying that. I know, wherever you are in these days, you *are* at the Front."

It was something. It was undoubtedly too much, and yet it comforted. The eager hope rose in him: she had come to know of Greta's return. Without Napier's intervention, she had come to know of matters in that connection which had made her flee. Hardly was the hope framed when it was dashed.

"I got tired of waiting to hear from Greta," she explained. Besides, she had a feeling she could n't go on. She 'd written him that. To show him she really had got off, the letter was to be posted from Queenstown. It was in — Heavens! where *was* the green suit-case? Seeing him had put it out of her head.

Oh, Napier would look for, he would find, the green suit-case!

But, *no*, she dashed after him. "Certainly not," she faltered as she caught him up, unless by any chance she should n't find it in her cabin. With consternation in her face, she flew down the companion-way.

Serenity had returned when Napier met her a quarter of an hour later on the way to the dining-saloon.

"It 's a wonder I knew you," he said, "in a different hat."

"Can't wear the Mercury on board ship. But I won't

have you mocking at it." She stood with several letters in her hand.

"Why may n't I mock at a Mercury cap if I like?" He remembered he had n't waited till now to commit that indiscretion.

"Because my Mercury cap is your responsibility."

"My —"

"You 've forgotten already!" As they went down, she reminded him of that time she appeared in the blue hat with Michaelmas daisies. "You perfectly hated it." Yes, he remembered he had n't liked it. And Julian had quoted Herbert Spencer. Nobody was ever satisfied with hitting on the right thing. If a person found a special kind of ink-pot that suited him, or a milk-jug that would pour without spilling, or clothes that were just right, "we were so certain to want a change that the same thing was n't made again," Miss Nan supplemented. "But my same-shaped hat *has* been made again and again, and you never noticed! *That 's* all I get."

It was only to himself that Napier said: "No! no! She got more — more than was wise or well."

"Did you find the green suit-case?" he asked, "and my letter?"

"Oh, yes. But the letter was hardly worth showing."

He claimed the sealed envelope and opened it on the spot. He read:

Dear Gavan:

This is to say good-by. Since my talk with you I have n't felt I could go on staying here in England. So, as I have no news from Germany and hear that my mother is in New York, I 'm moving heaven and earth to get off to-morrow in the only really

good sailing this month. I wish I need not think of you over there in France, but I don't know how I can help that.

Yours,

NAN ELLIS.

P.S.— Perhaps you would n't mind writing me. N. E.

She gave a New York address.

Only to himself he put the question, On what terms had she left Julian? What lay behind the delight in the eyes that welcomed Napier? Ask? Not he. He would try not so much as to wonder. Even if the shining of the hours in front of them was no more than the fragile iridescence of a bubble floating in the sun, the greater was the need not to touch such beauty with too inquiring finger.

They found their places in the haphazard way of the first luncheon, before the seating is arranged. By ones and twos others came in, till the table, at which Nan was the only woman, was full. The strangers at her end seemed disposed to silence. Such words as fell audibly, though English and addressed chiefly to the waiter, bore out the impression given by the faces. Napier saw the steward about it afterward. There were to be no Germans at his table as finally selected. He wished afterward he had added, and no American actors. In which case Miss Nan would n't have come up from dinner with Mr. Vivian Roxborough and walked the deck at his side a good half-hour. If it were only for Julian's sake, she could n't be left to Mr. Vivian Roxborough. Napier made it his business to avert the chance.

That next day — forever and forever the sunshine and the sweetness of those hours would leave something of

Napier went back and stood silent by her for a moment. Then he said:

"Give me what credit you can. I don't remember ever doing anything harder than that."

To his surprise, instead of reproaching him or punishing him with silence or with tears, "What do you expect your Government will do?" she said.

"Oh, I don't know." He did n't try to keep the touch of impatience out of his voice. "Regulate the traffic a little better, perhaps." He would have left it at that but for a trifling occurrence. The head of the German officer whom they had left a few minutes before on the upper deck appeared just then out of an open port in the dining-saloon. For the merest instant it was there, only to be withdrawn. And why, pray, *should n't* a man of any race look out at the sea from a public window? even, come to that, glance out at a pretty girl? "People may as well know," Napier said, "that the British Government has come to a point where it will be obliged to exercise its censorship openly and thoroughly instead of—" He frowned in the direction where the offending head had been. "I doubt if these fellows on board here have even been asked to make a declaration, let alone been examined."

"Why *should* they be examined?" The voice beside him rose indignant. "On the open sea! bound for a neutral country!"

He looked at her with different eyes. "The British port was the proper place," he said. "And perhaps people *were* examined. You know better than I."

"*I* know?" She stared at him.

"You know if they asked you to make a declaration before you came on board."

"*Me?* A declaration! About what?"

"As to what you are taking over." He heard his own stern voice as if it were some one else's.

"They asked," she said, with her chin up, "if I were taking over any letters to people in America?"

"And what did you say?"

"That I *was n't* taking over any letters." Her note, like his, had grown less and less patient. "Though I don't call it their business to ask an American going to America if she —"

"Do you mean," the interrogation went on, "they did n't look for themselves?"

"Look! Look where?"

"Look through your luggage, your hand-bag, your 'green suit-case.'"

"Certainly not."

"Well, they ought. And I shall see that next time they do."

Not anger only, and not only spirited revolt, appeared on the face Napier loved. The something else he had been vaguely aware of showed there clearer. He glanced sharply round and then bent over her. "What would happen if they did their duty? What if they were to search you?"

"To search me!" She stood up.

"'Sh!" He looked round again.

"They can't!" she triumphed. "Not now."

"Ah!" The emission of breath came as though forced out by a sudden physical anguish.

"What 's the matter? What are you thinking?" she cried.

"I 'm thinking that I wish to God you 'd go and get all that infernal stuff of Julian's in the green suit-case and throw it overboard."

"I have n't got any 'infernal stuff,'" she said, with the faint pink rising in her cheeks.

To Napier's further characterization of "the stuff," his bitter denunciation of this using of English good faith to hamper, if not to betray, England, the girl had her defense. Or, rather, she had Julian's reinforced by the American's innocent belief, prior to 1917, that to the citizens of that favored land no Old-World rules need apply, no Old-World danger was a menace. "Americans don't recognize," was one of her phrases. "We make our own rules. You are talking in the air. I am not carrying over any letters."

"Look me in the eyes, Nan, and say that you are not carrying something that I would prevent from reaching America if I had the power."

She got up and walked alone toward the stern of the ship. As she turned to come back, Vivian Roxborough rose out of his chair. Before he reached her side, a capped and aproned figure darted out of the narrow corridor, near the smoking-room, and spoke to Miss Ellis. The girl and the stewardess went below together. No sign of Nan for the rest of the afternoon.

At six o'clock Napier sent a note to her cabin.

I hope you 're not feeling out of sorts in any way. But if you are, may n't I see you a moment? Yours ever,
G. N.

The answer came back:

Not out of sorts at all, thank you,

Yours as always,
N. E.

When he did n't find her at the dinner-table,— she had been punctual hitherto — Napier went back to the upper deck and waited for her near the companion-way. Ten minutes went by. She must, after all, have been below somewhere, and was no doubt at dinner by now. He went back to the saloon and looked in. She was not there. As he returned again to keep his watch on the corridor leading from her cabin, the same stewardess who had carried the girl off early in the afternoon came laboriously up from lower regions, carrying a tray.

"Oh — a — you are the one who is looking after Miss Ellis, are n't you?"

"Yes. I 'm taking in her dinner."

"Oh, I see." But it was n't true. He did n't see in the very least why he should be punished in this way, a sulky way, moreover, and singularly un-Nanlike, as he told himself.

Just after the luncheon-bugle sounded the next day, Napier met the same stewardess again. Again she came toiling up the companion-way, tray-laden.

"You are taking that to Miss Ellis?"

Yes, she was.

"She is ill, then?"

"No, she is n't ill. Just having her dinner in Number Twenty-four."

"Twenty-four is n't Miss Ellis's number."

"No, sir. It 's the number of the lady who is n't feeling very well, though she does eat well. I 'll say that for her." The woman pursued her way with the access of vigor that a dash of vindictiveness will sometimes generate.

He had not so much as a glimpse of Nan until evening. Going down to dress, he met her coming out of the library with an armful of books.

"Well, at last!" He tried to take the books. She backed away from him.

"No, no, thank you. They 're just nicely balanced."

"Look here, what have I done?"

"You 've barred my way." She tried to pass.

"It is n't like you to take a mortal offense and not say how or what about."

"I have n't — taken offense." She leaned against the wall, hugging the books.

"Then why do you stay in your cabin the whole blessed time?"

"I have n't been in my cabin. I 've been in — I 've been looking after a lady who was n't well when she came on board and who is a very bad sailor. So as I 'm rather a good one — she *will* wonder what has become —" and before Napier could gather his wits, Nan was flying down the corridor.

The next day same program was continued, except that Napier hung much about corridor and companion-way, waiting in vain for even a glimpse of the flying figure. While walking the deck he had located Number Twenty-four, noting with surprise that a passenger who was ill, especially a woman looked after by Nan, should keep her

port closed in fine weather. He had of course looked up the number on the table diagram. Twenty-four was occupied by Mlle. La Farge, the devil take her!

A restless, wearisome day. He knew it an ill preparation for sleep. He turned up the light over his berth, the fierce, unshaded light, and read till his eyeballs burned. He extinguished the horrible glare and lay in the dark, turning and tossing, seeing in the renewal of his Nan-fever a punishment for defective loyalty to his friends. Twelve o'clock came. Is she asleep? As for him, he was wider awake than ever.

One o'clock in the morning. It was n't to be borne. The real trouble was that instead of taking a proper amount of exercise, he 'd hung about waiting. What was the night, the morning, rather — what was it like? He could n't bring himself to turn on the fierce flood of light. He felt his way to the port. Yes, a gibbous moon, rolling lopsidedly among the cloud-rack over a corrugated-iron sea. Was it hot or cold away from the stifling steam heat? He opened his port and breathed deep. He was not the only sleepless passenger. Two heads showed dimly, two figures in long ulsters leaning against the rail.

Presently a voice: "Now a little more walking, and you 'll feel better."

Nan! Good Samaritanizing! She was supporting the shorter figure, her arm round the thick waist. They started down the deck in the direction of Napier's open port, but thought better of it. They turned and went the other way in face of the wind.

Napier pulled on some clothes and hurried out. When

prepared for her. "*Is n't* it 'trying to undermine,' *is n't* it 'poisoning the mind,' if you ask me to put the worst construction on innocent things? Greta's diary! As she says, if you 'd read my diary to my mother, you 'd have *me* in the Tower. Oh, she is fair and just! She 's been saying to me only to-night, that since I 'll be going back there, perhaps living among them, I 'm to remember it 's only to the Germans the English are perfectly horrible. She was quite willing to leave me my illusions about you all till you yourself tear them away."

"Do you mind telling me how I 've done that?" He tried to stem the torrent.

She steadied herself with an elbow on the railing.

"Have n't you told me yourself about going through my friend's trunks when she was n't there? Oh, that—*that*, Gavan, was—" She turned suddenly and buried her face in her arm.

"Yes, it was a mistake."

She lifted a wet face up to him in the moonlight.

"The alternative," he said miserably, "would have been better. Instead of the private one, a public examination, Greta Schwarzenberg in prison instead of free—"

"Then she is right!" Nan stood back, clear of the railing, facing him. "You do want to be revenged."

She stood there, with the wind catching at the ends of her chiffon veil, blowing them back over her shoulder, for that instant before she, too, fled from him through the weather door.

CHAPTER XXI

THE morning of arrival found every one in the natural state of excitement induced by eight days' anticipation and three thousand miles of progress toward a given goal. Napier's glimpse of Nan, hurrying out of the breakfast-salon by an opposite door as he went in, showed excitement in her, too. Notwithstanding all that had happened, he was determined not to part from her on that note of last night. Anything, the merest commonplace, rather than that, he told himself, unable to strangle a larger hope.

Not in vain he, in his turn, despatched breakfast in short order and went above. There she was on the promenade-deck, her back to him, her face to the faint, still far-off outline of her native land.

In the raw chill of that February morning the prospect appeared anything but welcoming to Napier. It was different for her. In the forefront of her mind she was no doubt waving the Stars and Stripes. But, Napier could have sworn, deep in her heart was the thought of him and a secret planning of one of those "meetings in New York" she had spoken of in the first days. She stood there lightly poised, a little wistful, more than a little alluring. Another man, noting the empty deck, remembering that other sea they had stood by, locked together, would have gone up to her and put an arm about

the waiting figure. The scene of pretty confusion and tender yielding, the withdrawal, "Some one is sure to come!" and the hurried arrangement to meet — he saw it all. He wondered afterward what would have happened had he played his part.

When she found him at her side with "Good morning," she turned sharply as though to fly. It was all in the convention.

"You must be very happy to-day," he said.

"*Happy!* Why should I be happy?"

"Well, to be so near home."

"Oh, home!" She lifted her shoulder slightly. "New York is less my home than —" she stopped short.

"Than England?" he said.

"There 's one thing, anyway," she said in her elusive way. "If I can't go back for a good while, neither can you."

He stared at her, a great hope contending with mystification.

"Do I understand," he forced himself to answer lightly, "that you refuse to let me return home without you?"

Her cheeks showed sudden color.

"The Germans refuse to let either of us go if what Greta has heard is so."

"And what has she heard?"

"That soon after we sailed the Kaiser declared a blockade of England, an Atlantic war zone."

She saw that Napier had already had the wireless news before he asked:

"How does that affect you and me?"

"Even neutral ships are n't safe after to-morrow," she

said, accepting with the hypnotized docility shown by so many in those early days any edict bearing the German stamp. "What I 've been thinking is, you 'll be over here till the end of the war, so there 'll be time to — to understand — to get *some* things straight, anyhow." She turned to answer the good morning of one of the ship's officers.

Napier always believed that the first real shock to Nan's faith in Greta came as the passengers of the *Britannia* were about to disembark an hour later. Mr. Vivian Roxborough, very smart in new ultra-English clothes, had been observed threading his way among the crowd on deck, plainly in quest of Miss Ellis. No sooner had he caught sight of her than he pressed forward, and no sooner was he near her than he stopped short, his eyes intent on the lady at Miss Ellis's side.

Greta had forborne to challenge curiosity by absolutely concealing her features. But probably no one better than she understood the serviceability for disguise of a heavily figured white-lace veil.

Mr. Roxborough must have known her well to be able to say with such assurance: "Why, Greta —" and then in the rebound from that betrayal of too close acquaintanceship away to the other end of the scale: "I did n't know you were on board, Mrs. Guedalla."

Greta stared at him through the meshes of the elaborate pattern and said with her grand air: "Some mistake, I think."

Roxborough pinched his lips, "Oh, you don't remember me! Well, perhaps you 'll remember your husband. I 'm rather expecting my manager to meet me on the dock.

Or perhaps it 's *you* Mr. Guedalla is waiting for," Roxborough added with a peculiar smile.

Greta put a hand through Nan's arm and drew her near the gangway. Something must have been said for the girl turned her back with decision upon her late admirer. But her face was more than disturbed; it was shamed, frightened. A cut in public is a terrible thing to the innocent mind.

Napier stood close behind the pair, waiting for the excuse he felt that Mrs. Guedalla would make for not going down with the crowd to confront her husband. But the lady was too entirely mistress of herself for that. Perhaps she counted on Mr. Guedalla's knowledge of the wisdom of not interfering with his wife. Straight down the gangplank she walked, Nan behind her, recovering herself enough to make little signals toward a group — two ladies, a young man, and three children with flags — waving and smiling at Nan Ellis, first from the end of the crowded pier, then running along at the side, and now waiting finally at the bottom of the gangway to fall upon the girl with their welcome.

Napier had no difficulty in deciding which of them was her mother in face of the fact that Mrs. Ellis looked more like an elder sister. Yes, that must be a nice woman; but stupid, he decided, noting the cordiality, after the first motion of surprise, with which Mrs. Ellis received the lady in the baffling veil. She kissed Greta through the lace. Bah! With Nan's address in his pocket, he could afford to leave her and her party in the hands of a customs officer, opening trunks on the pier.

Indeed, he had little choice, he found himself appropri-

ated by an English friend and an American steel magnate — carried away into a world about which all that he had heard had very little prepared him.

His private as well as patriotic interest in the possibilities unfolded did not prevent him from putting himself in touch with the British Intelligence Department before he dined that first night on American soil.

The chief agent in New York was, or had been, as Napier knew, the British partner in an American shipping house. That he had married an American heiress, Napier also knew. He was the more surprised to find Mr. Roderick Taylor installed *en garçon* at an hotel.

"My w-wife," said the long, fair young man with the strictly pomaded hair, "is in P-Paris with her sister, who is or-organizing American Hospital Relief. In any case," —his smile seemed to accept Napier as one to be treated frankly —"all sorts of coming and going is less marked in a c-caravansary like this." The luxurious sitting room bore at that moment, though it was not yet six o'clock, signs of the indicated traffic. A bridge table not long abandoned, to judge by the glasses and cigar ends, stood there.

He had run across Stein, coming out from luncheon, said Mr. Taylor. Old Viennese friend of his, Stein. Had him up along with O'Leary, the Sinn Feiner, and a German-American dark horse, Bieber. "We are all dining at Bieber's to-morrow," Mr. Taylor smiled as one who preserves a native modesty in full view of triumph. It was n't the smile he showed to his experimental bridge parties. "Greta von S-S —" the slight, very slight stammer gave a touch of unreadiness which perhaps prevented the ex-

treme competency of Mr. Roderick Taylor from being too marked. Napier noticed later than the stammer was hardly discernible when the engaging young man was off duty.

"Yes, von Schwarzenberg." He helped Taylor over the barbed-wire of Teutonic syllables.

"*Know* her?" Taylor could go on glibly enough. "Rather!" And what, he asked, made Mr. Napier think the woman who had crossed with him as Mademoiselle La Farge *was* —

Clearly Mr. Taylor, whether in obedience to his own judgment or to the issue of some *mot d'ordre,* was disposed to take Napier at face-value; but he was far from accepting Napier's facts on the sole ground of Napier's belief in them. After the Schwarzenberg incident had been probed and sifted, Mr. Taylor sat back in his chair, gently perplexed and obviously perturbed.

"It 's not that we have n't been expecting her. The chief value of one of our men is that he has hitherto been able to keep in touch with her. But if she really has left the other side, he ought to have warned us." He took up the receiver of his desk telephone, and then laid it down. "We go warily with Miss von Schwarzenberg." He rose and opened a door at the very moment that a frail, grizzled man entered the adjoining room from the hall. "Oh, Macray, just a moment!"

The man did not stop to take off either hat or coat. Middle-aged, dyspeptic-looking, he came in, settling his black-rimmed pince-nez on an insufficient nose. He took a reporter's notebook out of his pocket and stood there, sour, hopeless, a mere sketch of a man in black and white.

"Greta Schwarz is back," said Mr. Taylor. Without a

pause and in the same low voice he ran rapidly over the main facts in the story Napier had told him. "Just set them to work," he wound up. "Quickest way to get on her track —" he turned to Napier —"what 's the American girl's address?" Napier did not disguise his reluctance to produce that particular information.

"You understand," he repeated for the benefit of the pessimist with the note-book, "this Miss Ellis is under the most complete misapprehension about the woman."

"Of course, of course," agreed Mr. Taylor.

Macray impassively poised his pen. Napier gave the address. Macray set down a grudging stroke or two, and then: "All New York knows where to find Schwarzenberg," he said, dragging out the information as though to talk increased his affliction, whatever it was. "Just heard. Been seeing reporters all afternoon."

"Who 's been seeing reporters?" Taylor demanded.

"Schwarz."

"The deuce she has!"

Macray felt in his pocket. He drew out an evening paper, damp from the press, and folded to display:

COLONIALISM IN AMERICA

ENGLISH DICTATION

IMPRESSIONS OF GERMAN-AMERICAN BACK FROM BELLIGERENT COUNTRIES

Napier stood at Mr. Taylor's side, and together they read how Miss von Schwarzenberg had not been an hour on this dear American soil, before she perceived with pain that, while Germany was fighting for freedom of the seas,

for human rights, America was forgetting she 'd ever won hers. After a genial reference in passing to the burning of Washington by the British, the lady protested that history was n't her strong point. Would some one, therefore, kindly tell her who had given the seas to the British? Upon the eloquent pause that seemed to have followed that request, the lady illustrated the service Germany was rendering the United States in protesting against English domination. It must be very humiliating, the lady thought, for Americans to have their mail-bags opened, their letters confiscated. "Of course some of the letters are for Germany. Why not? Is England to tell you to whom you may write? Is n't America a neutral? Or is that a pretense?" She gave cases of bitter hardships, German parents, old, ill, dying, whom faithful sons had long been accustomed to supply with remittances from America. In suffering British interference, America, so Miss Greta told the interviewer, had failed in dignity. Weakly, supinely, slavishly, America was submitting to British insolence.

Nothing in the interview occasioned Napier so much concern as the fact that it was stated to have taken place at a named hotel, "where Miss von Schwarzenberg is staying with old friends."

Mr. Taylor laughed a trifle ruefully as he threw down the sticky paper and applied a pocket-handkerchief to his long, white fingers. "I like America, he assured the newcomer, but there 's no denying it 's a queer country and a queer people. Is n't it so, Macray?"

Macray's only answer was a faint groan. He picked up his newspaper and walked gloomily out.

"The very strangest mixture," Taylor went on, "of shrewdness and innocence. Take their attitude toward this woman. She impresses them enormously." He disregarded Napier's "She impresses most people." "Over here they take this Mrs. Guedalla, or Schwarz, or whatever her real name is — they take her not only for a woman of education, but a woman *wohlgeboren*. They accept her account of misuse of her name. An obscure Western actress who, you are told, bears a certain dubious likeness to the real Greta von Schwarzenberg had feloniously adopted that honorable name. 'You know the stage way,' says Schwarzenberg. 'Tottie Tompkins turns into Arabella Beauchamp.' The real Miss von Schwarzenberg has naturally *never* been on the stage. She is musical. All *gebildete* Germans are musical. And that fact had been her salvation, so she tells these fatuous friends of hers over here. Being musical in the thorough German way enabled her to hold out against her proud, despotic father. When he tried to compel her to marry the dissolute Freiherr of vast possessions, Miss Greta ran away with her governess. Oh, always the scene is carefully set! And then, in order not to live on the governess, Miss Greta took to teaching music. They swallow it all! They look upon her as a patriot. A German patriot, of course; but still laboring devotedly and legitimately for her native land."

What made Taylor's dealings with her a delicate matter was the fact that she had these powerful friends, Americans whose good faith and general decency of conduct no reasonable being could doubt. She had kept herself in close relations with these people even while she

was abroad. His wife discovered that in Paris. How did Schwarzenberg keep up these useful relations? Through the one channel of organized participation in the war then open to American sympathizers, *Relief*.

"Lord! the jobs put through in the name of Relief!" Taylor exclaimed.

On his second evening in New York Napier went with the Van Pelts, his hosts, to hear "Lohengrin" at the Metropolitan. In a stage-box sat Miss Greta, very handsome, in green, with a silver wreath on her fair hair. The elderly lady beside her, according to the Van Pelts, was a well-known "society leader" with a taste for philanthropy. She had largely financed a certain branch of American relief work. That was her husband just coming into the box. But the girl — the Van Pelts could n't make out the girl. Napier could.

The next day, three tables away from him, at a men's luncheon given to Napier at a hotel, Greta again, with a different party except for Nan. Napier saw the girl's face brighten in that instant of catching sight of him. He saw her half rise, and then, as Greta fixed her eyes on Nan's, Napier saw the girl subside. From time to time she looked over wistfully. In a general movement after luncheon, emptying and refilling the great room, he was able to time his going out so that he might snatch a word with her.

"You have n't forgotten where I am?" she said hurriedly after they had allowed new-comers to separate them a little from their respective parties.

No, he had n't forgotten; but he had read that *she* —

he nodded in Greta's direction — was also at the same hotel.

"And that keeps you away! *That's* all you care!"

"Do you want, then," he said, with that daring which the sense of being safely lost in a crowd will lend —"do you *want* me to care?"

"No! At least I ought n't to." Greta and her guests were waiting. "If I 'd known how to find you," Nan went on speaking deliberately, as though making a declaration of rights, "I should have written you. I could let you see part of a letter I 've had from Julian. He tells news the papers don't."

Napier thanked her gravely and gave a private address. As he saw her disappear with "that woman," he said to himself for the thousandth time, If only he 'd been allowed to tell Nan about that Gull Island villainy at the time, she *could n't* have gone on making her loyalty a cloak for their common enemy!

The temptation to use his knowledge now, strove in him with an instinctive as well as a reasoned shrinking. The Gull Island affair could n't, he argued, still be a secret of any state importance. But in proportion as he cleared away that obstacle, the clearer yet another stood forth. It was one of the evils of a most evil time that he, Gavan Napier, of all men, had been forced to play a leading part in the violent end of a man with whom he and this gentle, sensitive girl had broken bread! Napier caught again that animal-like gleam of bared teeth as Carl Pforzheim writhed across the table for his pistol, saw again the gush of scarlet after the figure turned, met the knife, and fell back against

the wall. Let all that horror be hidden in the island earth and in oblivion. If Nan knew, never, never could it be forgotten.

The "news" in the letter she sent from Julian, was all of the gathering strength of the peace movement and the glorious part in it which America was destined to play. President Wilson, "the man with more power and a greater range of action than any ruler on the earth to-day"—President Wilson was the hope of the world. The rest of the page had been torn off. Nan was learning discretion, poor child!

In the intervals of business conclaves in the city, trips to Pittsburgh and elsewhere, Napier continued to cultivate Mr. Roderick Taylor despite that gentleman's refusal to lunch out, or to dine out. Not with Mr. Napier! Taylor was never seen in the company he most liked, as he said in his pleasant way. But there were private smokes and talks during which many things that had been mysteries to Napier became clear. Those were the days when Taylor and his agents were almost daily unearthing evidences of the underground activity of the pro-German propagandist. Among these moles of international mischief Taylor's weasels came upon Schwarzenberg's traces only to lose them. "Suspects of more public weight and interest, particularly men, were far more easily dealt with. These border-line women were the devil."

Never in all that time was Napier wholly free from a dread of hearing the name of Ellis in connection with Schwarzenberg; for always in his mind the figure of the winged messenger followed the devious ways of the German, followed like her shadow. The girl he loved was

lavishing faith and service, as well as financing this enemy of England. The thought was an anguish to him.

Nothing of all this to Taylor. The sole reference to the chief ground of Napier's own interest in the situation was a carelessly expressed opinion, "Schwarzenberg must be making a considerable hole in the Ellis pockets."

But, no. According to the omniscient Taylor, Schwarzenberg's spendings were on a scale quite outside the Ellis range. Taylor half closed his whitish eyelashes and regarded the end of his cigar. "I am, I believe, on the track of Schwarzenberg's new resources."

That telephone again! It was always ringing in here when Macray was out. Taylor listened, laughed, and made an appointment.

An Italian, he explained, a Mr. Luigi Montani, over here with his family. He had taken from some friends of Taylor's a furnished house in Washington. All arranged in twenty-four hours. Not a syllable in the press.

"He 's just been telling me that when his servants, Italians, went down-stairs the first morning, they could n't open the front door for the mass of pro-German literature shoved through the letter-box overnight."

The incident set Taylor talking about "the slender thread" on which may hang "the everlasting things" in international relationships. He talked of America with, as Napier thought, an understanding given to few foreigners. You could n't shake Taylor's faith in America. "But her ignorance of one entire hemisphere!"

Was it greater, Napier asked, than Old-World ignorance of the new?

No, no. Lack of mutual understanding was the common danger. To increase it was the German trump-card.

"People talk of America's largely unconscious power to wreck the world's best interests. She *won't!*" he cried with a passion that seemed alien to his nature; "but if there 's even a danger of it, it is because of innocent susceptibilities which the underground people, Schwarzenberg and her crew, are rubbing raw." And there was another thing. "If they should 'get at' Wilson, we 'd be in a bad way."

"The whole world would be in a bad way," said Napier, with a dizzying sense of the issues at stake.

"Yes, the whole world," Taylor agreed. And on his face, too, was a deeper gravity.

"I heard something last night"— Napier sat up suddenly —"that made me furious. I denied it. I want to hear you deny it. Fellow from Washington told us the President has given up receiving the British Ambassador."

"It 's true."

"My God! then Bernstorff *has* got him!"

"Not at all. It 's true Wilson 's given up seeing the British ambassador, and it 's true he 's given up seeing the German ambassador. Oh, a long head, Wilson's! He corresponds with the accredited official representatives, and he sees the unofficial, the people he can learn from and the people he can indoctrinate. You 'll be dealing with him less advantageously because of your mission, even thought it 's private. But"— Taylor got up to find a match. He paused to lay a hand on Napier's shoulder — "see Wilson soon."

It was already arranged, Taylor was told.

"Well, don't talk only munitions." Nobody better than the President, according to Taylor, knew that the old diplomacy was doomed. "This is the hour of the unofficial envoy."

In Washington, four days later, Napier had cause to remember that dictum.

CHAPTER XXII

NAPIER arrived at the White House some minutes before the time set for his interview. Hardly had he embarked upon a little kill-time tour through the public rooms when he heard hurrying steps behind him, and turned to confront Nan Ellis.

Her greeting was the strangest, considering all things.

"How do you do? I wanted to know — oh, *have* you seen Greta?"

No, he had n't. He could not forbear adding, Why should he?

"She was to meet me here." The girl turned and scanned the corridor, but in an excited, absent-mindedness as though her thoughts could n't pretend to follow her eyes. "I expect they won't let her go. Her own Embassy is immensely polite to Greta. I never knew she had so many grand acquaintances." She broke off, and then added breathlessly, "What are you doing here?"

"Waiting to see — certain people. I don't need to ask what you are here for," he added.

Her eyelids winked as though he had flicked something in her face. "Oh,"— she considered a second,—"I suppose you do know more or less, since Julian *made* me talk before you. Do you know what I think?"

"I 'd rather like to."

"Well, you shall. I think men are the indiscreetest people on the earth." And then, with that same suppressed excitement, she added, "All except one."

He made a movement toward a sofa — a movement she misinterpreted.

"O Gavan, *don't* go in just yet! He's got cart-loads of people to talk to, and I have n't anybody. You see, it must be somebody that as good as knows already. There *is n't* any one but you, is there? Of course, what I came for was to see the President. Every good American wants to see the President. So I done it —" she laughed as she threw up her head —"like Huck Finn."

"Not, I gather, with the *hoi polloi?*"

"The what?" But she did n't stop. "Oh, the trouble I had! I wrote and I wrote. I might just as well have been in an effete monarchy trying to approach the throne on my hands and knees. It made me mad, I can tell you. I said so. Told Senator Harned so. He's a friend of my mother's. But Senator Harned wanted me to give *him* the papers. Imagine!"

"Julian's manifesto?"

"Everything. As if I would! I've come all the way from Europe for a personal interview, and a personal interview I've got to have, or — well, something would have to be done." She wagged her head.

"I see. Something with boiling oil in it."

"Oh, they came to their senses at last, this very morning." She shone in the refulgence of the late-risen sun. "But do you know, up to the very last minute I had to be as firm as the Washington monument. He sent a Private Secretary to see me. And the Private Secretary tried

to make me 'abandon the matter.' Called it 'the matter'! I denied that 'matter' was the main object. I must see the President. I was an American. Had n't every American the right to see the President? Every American had the right to wring his poor hand in the presence of hundreds of other Americans. 'Very well,' I said, 'if I may n't see him, I 'll tell Senator Harned that I applied and sent in his letter, and waited for days, and was turned away at last.

"He asked me to wait a minute — the Private Secretary did. So I 'done it' again. After a while another man came and spoke to me, a gloomy man with a face like a clergyman who 's got a crime on his soul, and *he* took me into the Presence." She was only half laughing. "The Presence and I said, 'How do you do.' I was almost too excited to look at him properly, now that I 'd got him. But, O Gavan, he *is*, he really is!"

"H'm," replied Gavan.

"Wait till you see! He asked me why I 'd come. Melancholy man still hung about. 'I should like to speak to you alone,' I said. Do you think he would? No. As much a 'fraid-cat as any king. But he looked at the melancholy man, and melancholy man went and looked out of the window. It was really as good as having him out of the room if I lowered my voice. Then I told him. I gave him Julian's Manifesto and the rest. Yes, I had them all in the green suitcase." She laughed triumphantly.

"Well, I would n't advise you to carry such merchandise again."

"I sha'n't," she agreed, "not in any such way as that.

Babyish, I call it. But it was all right *this* time. I sat and watched him while he read Julian's Manifesto. He read it twice. It took hold of him. I could see that. Then I found him looking at me through his glasses.

"'What do your friends want me to do?'

"'To save civilization,' I said."

Napier could see her "doing Julian" for the President.

"I was awfully excited, but I remembered some more. He listened. He listens well. He makes you do your best. I felt encouraged. I made a case. Then I told him — oh, you won't like it, but I told him that Julian and the rest had far more backing in England than the newspapers gave the smallest inkling of. I told about the kind of men who were opposing the loss of liberty in the fight for liberty.

"'It is a menace before every country,' he said, in a discontented sort of way. He seemed not to want to think about it. I could see he was tired of considering me as a messenger any longer. I felt in the queerest way my best strength, my *value,* all going when I found him beginning to look at me as just a girl. He asked me questions that had n't a thing to do with the great business. They were kind questions; oh, yes, kind, and as if he were really interested. He gave me a feeling, too, that he 'd make everything all right. He made me feel very small and insignificant myself, but mighty proud of America."

"He seems to have taken your measure very accurately."

"What do you mean by that?" she asked, up in arms.

"Oh, we 've been told he knows how to deal with women. He can manage even the Suffragettes."

"Now you are a little spiteful. I know. You are jeal-

ous because *you* have n't got a President. *You 've* only got King George."

"I 've come to be grateful for George," said Napier, fervently.

"That may be, but nobody can call him exciting."

Napier assured her that was the precise ground of his gratitude.

The assurance went unheeded. She was still simmering with the excitement of her interview.

"Now the President *is* exciting. Perfectly wonderful, *I* call him. And perfectly splendid about peace, though he *did* say"— the little pucker gathered between her brows —"he *did* say we might have to fight for it. I forgot to ask him what he meant by that. I shall be dying to hear what you think about him. Could n't we"— she hesitated, and then as Napier did not make the hoped-for suggestion she made it herself —"could n't we meet?"

"Nothing I 'd like better — if you 're not with — if you 're here with your mother."

No, her mother was still in New York with the children. That was one reason Nan was having to go back. For Mrs. Ellis was leaving on Saturday for California. "Father needs her, and she says I don't, now I have Greta."

"I see; you have Greta."

"Greta is dining out to-night." She scanned his face with an expression which, in the retrospect, comforted him even more than to remember her delight at the arrangement finally made. He was to call for her. "Not later than half-past seven," because she had the packing to do before bed-time. Yes, they were going to New York by

the early train. Greta had to be in New York to-morrow night for a meeting.

"Hallet Newcomb's, I suppose?"

Nan opened her eyes.

"How odd you should guess! But *is n't* it fair-minded for her to go to a pro-Ally lecture by an Englishman?"

He smiled faintly as he hurried back to the anteroom.

On the way out, after his interview with the President, Napier could not fail to see among the waiting crowd, composed chiefly of men, the very striking figure of a yellow-haired woman in deep conversation with a certain senator much at the moment in the public eye. But Miss von Schwarzenberg did not leave Mr. Napier's recognition to chance.

"Oh, here you are!" She turned her back on the important person and joined Napier with as much effrontery as though the meeting were what she so successfully gave the impression it was, a matter mutually arranged. In face of the absence on his part of the least response, she walked on at his side. "I 'm the only one here in all this throng," she said in a confidential tone, "who is n't waiting to see the President."

"That 's a lie!" he said to himself as he stalked on.

"*I 'm* waiting to see you. You must bear with me, I 'm afraid," she said in gentle accents. "It 's about Nan. You have n't been to see her because I 'm there. Is n't that a pity?"

Napier's apparent obliviousness of her presence vanished. He made no effort to keep his indignation out of his face as he stopped abruptly to say: "I decline to discuss that or anything else with you." He turned his back on her

with unmistakable finality, marched out into the corridor, and so to the columned porch, with never a look behind.

Napier had n't often betrayed in public such heat of anger as the woman's audacity had stirred in him. Much she cared! he told himself, still tingling. She would shrug her handsome shoulders and return to her senator. Presently she would be entering the sanctum Napier had just left. To-morrow, in Hallett Newcomb's audience. Newcomb was one of those Britons invited by American friends to come and correct transatlantic misapprehension, and to present facts. Yet even such unorganized and unofficial efforts, so slight in sum, were not suffered by the thoroughgoing German propagandists to pass unchallenged or unneutralized. In this connection Roderick Taylor had set down to Miss Greta's credit an astute discovery. It was that, as some one put the case, "pro-Ally Americans stayed away from these meetings in vast numbers." Your pro-Ally American did n't need converting. He was occupied in other ways. What he failed to recognize was that in the absence of a sufficiently represented pro-Ally element in these audiences, Miss Greta's confederates, judiciously disposed about the hall, could and frequently did get up a powerful and "spontaneous" pro-German demonstration. By this means certain meetings convened in the interests of the Allies were turned into triumph for their enemies.

In front of Napier, at the office desk in Miss Ellis's hotel, stood a man impressing on the clerk in an undertone the importance of a letter he had brought. Could he have a receipt for it? Could he see the bell-boy who was to de-

liver it? That business despatched, the clerk was free to attend to Mr. Napier. Yes, he had been told a gentleman of that name would call for Miss Ellis at 7:30. A bell-boy was waiting to take Mr. Napier up.

Side by side in the elevator they shot through story after story, to be set down near the roof. With his thumb pressing the envelop to a little brass tray, the bell-boy held in its place, address face-downward, the much-sealed packet which had been the object of so much solicitude. At the end of an interminable corridor the bell-boy tapped at a door. Without waiting, he opened it and went in, returning almost at once with the tray empty and the words, "This way, sir."

The instant Napier was over the threshold, the door was shut behind him. He stood facing Miss von Schwarzenberg. She had risen in the act of laying the sealed packet on the table. In the midst of his surprise Napier mentally registered the fact that he had never seen her in more brilliant good looks. She was wearing over her dinner dress a superb fur coat, thrown back to show her jeweled neck.

"I am too early," Napier said. "I will wait downstairs."

"You are not too early. It is Nan who is late. She won't be a minute." Miss Greta pointed to a chair as Napier stood that instant rigid by the door. "*Don't,*" she cried softly —"don't be so hard upon me! Can't you see that I 'm not standing in your way any more?"

"If that is so, you have your own reason for it." He turned and laid his hand on the door-handle. These American fastenings! He turned the knob fruitlessly.

"Don't be so hard!" She had come toward him; her

voice burred softly over his shoulder. "When I 'm trying to keep the straight road, *don't* force me down into the dark ways I abhor. Oh, listen, Gavan! Give me a chance to explain!"

"What 's the matter with this door?" he demanded.

"How do I know?" She pressed her lace handkerchief to her lips.

He rattled the handle.

"For God's sake! don't make a scene!" she cried in a harsh whisper. "Are you so *bent* on humiliating me! — both in private and in public as you did this morning? Another woman would n't forgive you this morning. And now, again, you want to humiliate me. Before hotel servants!"

"You told that bell-boy to fasten the door."

"Hush! For Nan's sake, anyway, don't make a scandal here!"

Napier turned and looked at her. "Whatever your motive is you are wasting time."

"Not if you give me five minutes to explain. For you, too," she said with meaning, "it won't be wasting time."

His answer was to lift his hand and press the electric bell.

"Ah,"— she stepped back,—"you are implacable! You — you don't care how much you injure yourself if only you can injure me. Yes, you — !" She broke off and turned away. For several moments she stood in that attitude, giving him ample time to relent, her meek head bent, the dazzling whiteness of her neck set off by the dark fur collar falling away from her shoulders. The silence was broken by a stifled sob as she carried her hand-

kerchief to her lips and began to walk up and down. "I can't disguise it from myself any longer. You"— she stopped in the middle of the room —"you are the great disaster of my life." She waited. She gave him time to disavow the rôle. "Very well"— she folded her arms under the heavy fur —"very well," she repeated with a quiet intensity, "I shall not go out of your life, either, without leaving my mark. *She* shall make it up to me! Yes, and she shall make it up to Julian Grant for what he has given and lost. Be sure I shall see to that!" She came forward with an air of great dignity, slipped some catch, and opened the door. "Go!" she said in a penetrating voice.

Out of the elevator that shot up in response to Napier's ring stepped the same bell-boy. Napier's last look back showed the boy running down the corridor, one of the long list of Greta's slaves.

The elevator stopped at the second floor. Nan stood waiting.

"Why," she exclaimed with boundless surprise, "where *have* you come from?"

"There has been some mistake," Napier said. "I was taken to the wrong floor."

"I should think so! I was going down to see if my message had been forgotten. Oh, come while I get my gloves."

She disappeared through a sitting-room into a room beyond. Clearly Greta had taken some trouble to achieve her brief tête-à-tête.

As Nan came back, drawing on a long white glove, Napier was aware of some one flying down the stairs, some one for whom express elevators ran too slowly. A moment

after the terrified face of the bell-boy appeared at the open door. "Come! Come quick! She's dying!"

"Who is dying? What has happened?" Nan demanded.

"Miss von Schwarzenberg," he gasped. "Quick!"

"But Miss von Schwarzenberg has gone out!"

"No! no! She's up-stairs. Come quick, or it will be too late." He rushed to the elevator and rang. "It's coming!" he cried over his shoulder.

"Is he crazy?" Nan asked, dazed, but following Napier.

"It is probably some device to prevent your going out with me," he said as the elevator stopped.

Again the boy sped down that interminable upper corridor, the two hurrying at his heels.

"I'll wait for you," Napier said. They had come to the door which the boy had not dared to open till he was supported by the presence of others. He knocked now, opened, and stood back.

Greta, in the arm-chair, the fur coat at her feet, had flung bare arms out across the table and half sat, half lay there, moaning, with hidden face.

Nan rushed in and took the woman in her arms. Napier, full of disgust for what he looked on as a piece of cheap theatricalism, was startled as the face fell back against Nan's shoulder. That it should be so blotched, so disfigured in that short time, bore witness to the violence of whatever the feeling was that had torn and still was tearing the woman. More than by any other sign, the fact that her heavy hair had become loosened unbecomingly,

grotesquely, brought Napier the conviction that for once Greta von Schwarzenberg was n't acting. The great yellow mass of braids and curls had lurched over one ear, giving a look more of drunkenness than grief to the convulsed face. That one glimpse was enough. Napier turned away and paced the corridor for those leaden-footed minutes till Nan ran out, looking blindly up and down.

"Where are you? Oh, the most cruel, awful thing has happened! She has just had his letter. Greta's lover — Count Ernst Pforzheim is dead." The girl's eyes were full of tears. "Think of poor Greta running away up here to hide herself so as not to interfere with my pleasure!" She turned back to the room.

"Have you heard — any details?" Napier detained her to ask.

"Only that he died for the fatherland."

For all Taylor's professed anxiety to have Napier's report of his interview with the President, he was late. He was very late. Macray had looked in twice, the lines in his sallow face deepening as the black-rimmed glasses verified the solitary figure in the room.

Finally he came in and closed the door. He crossed the long room and stood at Napier's side before he said with that brisk familiarity that cost Napier something not to resent: "Remember that shady Bureau de Change, Mr. Taylor told you about?" As Napier did not instantly respond, Macray went on in his gloomy telegraphese, "Suspicious boom since Schwarz's reappearance."

Oh, yes, Napier remembered *that*.

"Hahn — fellow we 've had investigating — been waiting for Taylor two mortal hours. Off to Chicago to-night — Hahn. 'Fore he goes, detail in bureau business got to be established. Hahn wants to go openly — one of the public — see 'f he c'n do business."

"Well, what 's the objection?"

"*No* objection. Only Taylor 's kept him waitin' such an infernal time, Hahn won't be able lay hands on anybody right sort before bureau shuts. Wants a witness. Fellow seems think I c'n hang fishin'-line out the window and hook what he calls 'suitable witness.' S'pose *you* would n't?"

Napier was growing accustomed to exigencies and odd manners. He had the man in. Once or twice before he 'd seen here the clean-shaven young German-American, with his look of the typical waiter (which he was n't) over-fed, under-exercised, a little scornful, with a leaden eye fixed on the main chance. One thought instinctively of tips as one's own eye, leaden or otherwise, took in his "waiting" air. He regarded his prospective companion without enthusiasm.

"You can't wear a stove-pipe hat," he said, "and you 'd have to borrow a different overcoat."

Napier's instinctive reluctance was overborne by Macray's misinterpreting its origin. "Schwarz won't be there. No fear! All same, no sense exciting remark."

Napier in his turn made no secret of the ground of his special interest in the enterprise. "Why do you think she 's behind this concern?"

Macray's curt: "Don't think. Know," decided Napier.

Two flights up, in a derelict office building on lower Broadway, they found a back room with a number on the door. It bore no business sign, no name.

The arrangement that Hahn should do the talking was initiated in the German tongue as they climbed the dingy stairs. Napier's secret uneasiness took alarm at the sound of steps behind. He looked back. On the first landing, under the flaring gas, which of itself was a sign of the outworn character of the place, a shabby old man in a fur cap was coming up behind them. Coming stealthily, Napier felt. But Hahn talked on stolidly about a hypothetical family in Karlsruhe. He knocked at the door, and then went in.

A hairless head, with outstanding ears, bent over a table, reading. The gas jet, directly above, was set in a green tin reflector, and all the light in the room seemed to concentrate itself on that corpse-white cranium; or, rather, the effect was as though the masked light, instead of being thrown on the man's head, had its origin there. A polished and luminous orb, it seemed to contain the shining like one of those porcelain globes over the old-time lamps.

"Is dis de blace vhere I can send money to Sharmany?" Hahn inquired.

"Yep," said the clerk. "Shut the door, will you?"

Hahn had not budged. "Bott *safe,* hein?" he said.

"Absolute." The man got up and shut the door. It was a drafty old place, he explained. "Safe?" he went on, resuming his place and gathering the light to himself again. This was not only a safe way; it was the only safe way.

Hahn produced a worn pocket-book. He wanted to send fifteen dollars to Karslruhe.

Fifteen dollars? It was a long way to send only fifteen dollars. The worst of it was, the commission was heavier in proportion for a small sum like that. It cost the company as much to send fifteen dollars as it would cost to send five hundred.

"Vot gompany?"

"This one. Who sent you here?"

"Fleischmann, Sevent' Avenue."

"Well, did n't he tell you about the company?"

"All Fleischmann tell me is de address." What he wanted, Hahn went on, was to send fifteen dollars every fortnight.

"Oh, every fortnight." The polished head bent over the address.

Hahn opened his pocket-book and fingered some bills. But how was he to know the money would reach Karlsruhe?

"Simple enough; we guarantee it. I give you a receipt." The man opened a book of printed forms, dipped a pen into a dirty inkstand, and wrote the date.

How long, the visitor insisted, before he would hear from his family that the money had come?

"Depends on how soon they write." The tone was distinctly superior. "Family habits in these matters are different, we find."

His family acknowledged their letters instantly, Hahn said, if they got them. They *had n't* been getting them.

"You have been here before?"

"No."

"I thought not. Then why did you expect your letters to get through, above all if they had money in them?" The unshadowed eyes in the pudding visage rested on the three five-dollar bills Hahn still held in his hand.

Hahn wished to know how soon he might hear if his family acknowledged at once.

"As a rule inside six weeks."

What would be the longest time, Hahn then wished to know.

"Two months —"

"It is a lie!" came from a crack in the noiselessly opened door. At a child's height from the floor a fur cap was thrust in. The gray beard sticking out beyond the mangy headgear gave the old face a fierceness instantly contradicted by the eyes.

"I haf a letter," he said, trembling with excitement. "De money I send two mont' before Christmas it nefer come. De money my friend send t'ree veek before dat, it nefer come. You gif me my money back!" He came in, swinging his greasy coat-tails about his shambling legs. "Here is de baper to show you get my money."

The altercation went on in German, with excuses, threats. "Get out, or the police —"

"Oh, you vill not like bolice here."

There was righteous anger on the part of the man at the desk; but a certain caution, too. Nobody could say at a time like this that in one case out of thousands something wholly unforeseen might not happen to delay —

"It is *not* delayed!" the little man screamed. "It did not come! It vill not come! Vhere is it? Gif it back!"

"Ah-h, I remember you now!" the unlashed eyelids narrowed. "In your case, and to an address like that—"

"Vot de matter vid the address?" screamed the old man. "Berfectly goot address!"

"I warned you it would be wisest to insure." He turned bruskly away from the agitated figure. "I will talk to you when I 've finished. These gentlemen are in a hurry."

"Not at all. No, certainly not." Hahn backed to the door. He would wait.

"Vy to insure," the old man was shrilling, "if to send by you is, like you said, so safe? *Hein?*" He leaned over and hammered the ink-stained desk with a dirty fist.

The man behind the receipt-book shifted his position. He got up, and the light in the globe he bore on his shoulders was extinguished as by the turn of a screw. Hands in pocket, he stood in a shadow above the green reflector. "Safe, money undoubtedly is, in our hands. If," he repeated, "in one case out of a thousand it gets out of our hands, what then? Maybe you have heard there is a war? Maybe you can read?"

The old man gibbered with rage and offended pride; but the lines of defeat, which life had stamped on his face, deepened.

"Very well," said the other, with an effrontery that said he had marked the signs, "since you can read, you know who it is who robs the mails. Only twice since the war have they caught us, and we have sent tens of thousands of dollars. Ask the thieves of English where your money is!"

"Ai!" In the middle of the tirade the old man had turned away and spread out his hands in impotent grief.

"In war," the agent called after the broken figure — "in war it is wise to insure."

"Gone! All gone! Ai!" The quavering old voice trailed down the dingy stair.

Hahn mumbled an excuse, and the two new clients withdrew despite vigorous protests. Once outside the room, Hahn plunged down the two flights as though in fear of his life. When Napier reached the street there was no trace anywhere of either the old man, or of Hahn.

He recognized their collaboration in the account given in the New York papers, a few days later, of an exposure of one of the several concerns, all, it was hinted, under one (unnamed) management which, with no capital beyond a back room, a table, a chair, and a clerk behind a book of receipt "blanks," raked in hundreds and thousands from gullible people who thought they were helping their friends in Germany.

CHAPTER XXIII

"SCHWARZENBERG and her friends will be a little straitened for a while after this," said Taylor.

The expression "her friends" grated on Napier, and Napier was already in a restless, uncertain mood. Taylor had noticed that. Significant as both men "deemed" the interview with the President, Napier had hurried over it to canvass and sift the Hahn adventure.

Taylor, lounging on the sofa, sipped his liqueur at his ease. How did he know the bulk of the bureau's money went into Schwarzenberg's pocket? Two reasons. First, she'd earned it. Languishing business doing a roaring trade from the moment she took hold. Second, the fellow she set to watch the rogues she'd put in charge was a rogue himself.

"Oh, we've deserved well of our country in blocking up a few of those rat-holes," Taylor concluded.

"My interest in it," Napier paused to say, "was n't pure patriotism. It's made me pretty sick to see this Miss Ellis — rather a friend of mine she is, very intimate with my chief's family — so hopelessly taken in. I had an idea this bureau business might show up —"

Taylor abandoned his lounging posture. He sat looking at Napier very steadily out of his greenish eyes.

"Oh, I quite understand," Napier went on, "the exposure is too discreet to be of any use to me."

"I should rather think so!" remarked Mr. Taylor.

"All the same, it is n't fair, leaving people like the Ellises in the dark. The mother is off to the Pacific coast to-morrow." Napier added that he was due at their hotel in half an hour. He was going to talk to them, he said.

Still Taylor sat there, regarding his guest through a haze of cigar smoke. "I thought," he said after a moment, "you mentioned that you *had* talked to them — to the girl, anyway."

"I said I 'd told Miss Ellis what Singleton found in Schwarzenberg's box. And God knows that *ought* to have been enough —"

"Too much," said Taylor, quietly. "Of course they passed it on to Schwarzenberg."

Napier doubted that. "You don't know the Ellises," he said, ignoring the limitations of his own acquaintance. No, his mistake had not been in telling too much. His mistake was that he had n't told the Ellises enough. He was going to repair the mistake to-night.

"How are you going to do that?" Taylor asked in the same careful tone.

By telling them — telling the girl, anyway — that he 'd avoided telling her before — the *proved* desperate character of this woman's accomplices.

A peculiar fixity came into Taylor's green eyes.

"You can't pass on information we 've put in your way here."

"Certainly not," returned Napier with some heat. "What I shall tell has nothing whatever to do with you. I sha'n't hint bureau." Again he consulted his watch. The time dragged.

"You 'd mind, I suppose, giving me an idea what you do mean to hint?"

"I sha'n't hint at all. And I 've come here to-night expressly to tell you, first, that I mean the Ellises to know about Gull Island. About Greta von Schwarzenberg's connection with it and with the man we found there."

There was silence in the room.

"I dare say you are wondering why, in the face of the exigency, I 've put it off?"

Taylor had stopped smoking, but he said nothing.

"If I 'd told her what I found Carl Pforzheim up to on Gull Island, she 'd have to know what became of Carl. Well, I 'm now going to tell her."

"You can't do that!" Taylor had come to life. He leaned forward, blinking his white lashes as if a cinder had blown in his eye.

"Why can't I?"

"For one thing, telling the Ellises would be as good as giving Schwarzenberg the key to the whole Gull Island business."

"Well, why not? Do her good. Put the fear of God into her, perhaps. And she can't spoil a game that 's over and ended."

Taylor laid down his cigar.

"The Gull Island game," he said in his guarded voice, "*is n't* over and ended."

Napier stood waiting.

"We 've got one of our best men there this minute, personating Carl Pforzheim." Taylor nodded in the face of Napier's stark astonishment. "Your friend Singleton. He 's managed the Gull Island job from the beginning.

Went up again the day after you were there. Wirelessed the German agent at Amsterdam that he 'd had wind of a raid on the island. He was going to destroy every trace and get out. Singleton saw to it that the truth of that much was verified, and duly reported to the Wilhelmstrasse. He promised them — still, of course, in the character of Pforzheim — to get back to the island as soon as it was safe. Well, he has got back."

"What the devil could he tell of any use to Germany that was n't fatal to us?" Napier demanded.

"You don't yet appreciate the situation," Taylor said softly. "It 's a post of special advantage just because the man in charge can choose his own time to be there. He can give important information that reaches Germany the merest trifle too late, or information that he knows they 've had already from another quarter. They 're fond of verifying their intelligence. And he tells them things they want to believe and can't check — things they have to take his word for, things that will throw dust in the eyes they count on seeing clearest. I tell you, Gull Island is one of the cogs in the wheel of the British machine. You won't mind if I 'm frank? Well, then, you 'd have hard work to commit any indiscretion"— Taylor rubbed it in —"that would serve Schwarzenberg's ends so well as to enable her to warn the Germans that a British decoy was nesting in Carl Pforzheim's place."

As he stood there, a prey to increasing uneasiness, Napier had his further glimpse of one of the disintegrating effects of wartime: the unknown quantity in character. How that had been forced home! Taylor had seemed "one of the best." No one in the British service was more

trusted, and, Napier's instinct told him, no one more justly. None the less, Napier did n't see headquarters writing "all this" from the other side.

"I suppose," he found himself saying, "I ought n't to ask you how you heard about the decoy duck on the island?"

"Well"— Taylor reflected an instant,—"after all, my instructions — yes, I 'll tell you. I have it on the best possible authority. Ernst Pforzheim told me."

"Ernst! Ernst Pforzheim is in an English prison, or rather, he was before —"

"Exactly. Before he became of such use to our side. Clever dog as that fellow Singleton is, he could n't have worked the Gull Island oracle without Ernst Pforzheim's help."

Ernst had helped Singleton! No! no! there were limits. It was, anyway, safe to say, "You must in that case rather deplore his death."

"What makes you think he 's dead?" Taylor asked.

"His particular friend, Miss von Schwarzenberg, had the news yesterday."

"She had, had she? Ha! ha! The canny Ernst!" Taylor subdued his mirth to say: "Just so. Wilhelmstrasse does n't have the news. *We 're* all right; and Master Ernst can go on drawing pay from two governments. Oh, he 's a very practical person, is Ernst. The situation is his own invention. A piece of 'war economy,' he called it. 'You English hard up for ammunition. Why waste it shooting a spy when he can give you more valuable information than anybody in the German Secret Service?'"

"You can't seriously mean we were such fools as to trust a man like that?"

"So far from trusting him, we keep him under surveillance every hour of his life. Two of our men specially detailed."

"You are n't telling me he 's over here!"

"Been here six weeks."

"Then he 's a free man!"

Taylor smiled. "A man who 's been doing the sort of business Ernst has, is never a free man. Nobody knows better than Ernst how little his life would be worth if he took any liberties. And why should he? This is his harvest-time. He knows he 'll get more out of us than —"

"Than out of Germany?"

"They 'd ask very awkward questions of Ernst in Germany; he can evade them here. But there 's a day of reckoning waiting for Mr. Ernst in the fatherland. No one knows better than he that he 's safer with us, looked after by two capital fellows, till after the war. Then off to South America with a fat bank-account. And, by Jove! he 'll have earned it! The cheek of the devil! Except for one enterprise!" and Mr. Taylor chuckled as he relit his cigar.

"We 'd been wondering," he went on, "Macray and I, why the beggar had grown so content never to go out. No more music, no theater, no smart restaurants, and so far as *we* could see, no reason on earth why, with one or other of the men who stick to him day and night, he *should n't* revisit his old haunts. Not he!" Again that pleased chuckle. "Not so long as Greta von Schwarzenberg is circulating about New York!"

"Why, he and she are, or they were, thick as thieves."

Taylor nodded.

"And it would be undeniably useful to us to have that relation continue. It's where our friend draws the line. 'All very well to laugh,' he says to me, '*you* don't know the woman. I do. *Nein, danke.*' So he sits and smokes and plays cards, drinks and overeats himself, and is losing his figure. I can take you round any evening, and you 'll see for yourself."

"I 've come to say good-by." Napier stood before Nan Ellis in the great public parlor of her hotel. More and more his most private experiences of American life had seemed conditioned by the vast restlessness of these places. He noticed that Nan, like many of her compatriots, was able to achieve an obliviousness to such surroundings that amounted to a kind of privacy.

Instead of relinquishing his hand, she had clutched it tighter: "You are not going back to England?"

"What 's the use of my staying here?"

"The use?" She let his hand go. Napier received the impression that the lowering of her tone was less attributable to two or three other absorbed groups seated about the great room, than to some sudden rush of feeling that clouded her voice. "You are safe here."

He looked at her for a moment. Deliberately he shook off the impression her tone more than her words had made. "No,"— he shook his head,—"I 'm far from safe where you can ring me up."

"You don't *like* me to ring you up?"

He could have laughed if he 'd been less oppressed.

"It 's no use. I see I can't do anything to protect you. I might as well be on the other side of the world."

"No! no!" she protested with an eagerness that caught her breath. "Besides, you are very far from sure of *getting* to the other side of the world as things are."

His look of angry scorn, for the contingency implied, agitated her.

"Oh, *do* believe me! This is a thing I know more about than you do."

"It is n't a knowledge you should have," he said sternly.

She swept the rebuke aside in her alarm. "Don't imagine," she said in that strained undertone —"don't imagine the warnings in the papers are n't serious. It is one of the things I could n't write. Why did n't you come and see me and my mother last Thursday?"

He was aware of being as little able now, to make idle conversation with Nan, as he had been that night, after Taylor had barred all use of the Gull Island evidence. He dropped out mumbled phrases, "Unexpected business," having "to go to Washington," and was there anything else she had n't been able to write?

Yes, yes. There was a great deal more, more than she had any right to say. But this much she must tell him: "You are n't to ask me how I know, and you won't ask me to tell you more than I 've a right to. I *have* a right!" She flashed an instant's defiance at some unseen opponent, "or I 'll take it, anyhow. The torpedoing is going to be extended. *Yes!*" she said as though to convince her own shrinking incredulity as much as his. "Neutral as well as enemy ships. They 're going on till England is as isolated as she 's isolated Germany. If England won't believe that,

if England does n't *realize,*"— she waited an instant as if to give him time to throw out a life-line of hope to her proviso,—" then," she said as she took in Napier's motionless figure and stern face —" then what 's before us is too horrible."

" I am glad you recognize the horror of the German policy."

" What good will that do!" she began hurriedly, " if you —" and then half to herself: " But you simply *must n't go!* You did n't know, perhaps," she leaned nearer, " passenger-boats have been carrying guns."

" Really? " said Napier.

She nodded. " It 's true. And that 's why the Germans say they will sink passenger-boats. So they can't be used any more by travelers, now that they 're warned."

" You see it as simple as that? Germany is to tell neutrals they are not to travel even in neutral waters! "

" If we don't use passenger-boats *for* passenger-boats, they are n't passenger-boats any more." (Napier heard Schwarzenberg speaking.) " They go loaded to the guards! Yes, war material for the Allies."

" If that is so, why is it? Would you see the Allies punished, enslaved, because the Allies have n't, as Germany has, devoted the last forty years to making and accumulating arms? Germany —"

" Oh, it 's *America* I 'm thinking of — after you! " she threw in. " If America's part is going to be just to grow rich and richer out of this awfulness, I don't know how I shall bear it. And that 's what I 'm telling Julian. But all that,"—she swept it aside with one of those quick motions of a flashing hand,—" if I *beg* you not to go —"

"It 's no use," said Napier.

"Nothing I could say or *do*?"

He shook his head.

"Very well, then," she said with hurt mouth that quivered, "what is the name of your boat?"

He considered a moment. "Don't you think it would be very indiscreet of me to tell you?"

"It will be the discreetest thing you ever did in your life."

"Why do you want to know?"

"I want to know because"— again she bent to him — "because there 's a black-list." He saw her eyes bright with terror. "You must give me time to find out. . . ."

"I see," he interrupted. "You would like me to owe my life to Greta von Schwarzenberg."

"To me, Gavan,"— the pallor of her face yielded to a sudden flush,—"if you could bear that."

"I have n't decided on my boat," he said.

"But I thought you came to say good-by?"

He was going on a few weeks' tour on this side, he said.

Oh, the lightening in her face. He seemed bent only on teasing her a little, in withholding the answer to her quick: "Whereabouts are you going to tour?" When she had waited for the answer that did n't come she said: "You 're afraid I 'll tell. Everybody 's afraid every one else will tell. Everybody 's changed."

"Not Miss Greta, surely?"

"Greta as much as anybody," she flung out. And then, as though she regretted that ebullition, she added hastily: "I suppose I must n't ask you — what next, after the few weeks' tour."

"Yes, you may ask that," Napier said, the smile going out of his eyes. "France next."

They parted with no hint from him of the fact that one result of his second visit to Washington had been an extension of the highly successful unofficial mission.

For Taylor had been right in saying the old sharp demarcations between government departments were being erased. More and more diplomacy impinged on the twin provinces of trade and world finance. The astute were beginning to see that the problem of munitions was own brother to food supply, which in its turn was a matter of transport. In view of the now frequent sinkings of Allied ships, not only South American meat, wheat, but South American tonnage, might become of supreme importance in a protracted war. Unfortunately, German influence had attained dangerous proportions in those remote, fertile areas below the equator. Napier and another unofficial British envoy received orders from home to proceed to Rio on instructions from the British Ambassador at Washington.

He returned to New York early in May, to find the country in a state of excitement such as the United States had not known since the assassination of Lincoln. Some twenty-four hours before, the Germans had torpedoed the *Lusitania*. Fifteen hundred lives had been sacrificed. The effect on Napier was the effect on many. The *Lusitania* dead recruited tens of thousands.

On the afternoon of the day of his arrival in New York, Napier returned to his hotel, having engaged passage to England by the next ship.

A lady, he was told, waited to see him. What lady was

likeliest to have news so quickly of his arrival? He shrank from the thought of Greta as from something reptilian. It *could n't* be Greta on this day of all days. And who else, but the being of all the world he most hungered to see? So thinking, he made his way among the hosts of horror-stricken people, one sole theme in every mouth, *Lusitania! Lusitania!* Some, and not one most voluble or outwardly most excited, uttered the word War with an accent that Napier wished might have been heard across the Rhine. He kept on telling himself that he knew it would be Nan he should find waiting; but he was not prepared for the Nan he found, nor for that low exclamation: "At last! At *last!*" nor for the shaken voice in which she disposed of his question how had she known of his arrival.

"An arrangement with the clerk," she said, to ring her up as soon —

"Then *that* was before!"— said Napier hungrily.

"Yes, before the awful news." A shuddering vagueness seemed to close about her like a mist. It shut out the moment's shining at his coming. He could see that blank horror at the tragedy obscured for the moment everything else in life.

Only Napier, it seemed, felt the added strain of this coming and going of excited people, the bringing in of telegrams, the dictating of others. The girl paid no more attention to the other people scattered about the great room, to their tension or their tears, than they to hers. As she turned to throw her trembling body down in a chair by the window, the look in her eyes startled Napier.

"And did you see what the papers said?" she demanded.

The terrible newspaper accounts, which he had not yet

found time to read, she had by heart. Behind that veil of nervous vagueness he caught glimpses of the intensity of her realization — her participation, one might almost say — in the scenes off the Irish coast.

"Had you any special friend on board?" he asked.

"Special fr —" she repeated in that low voice. And then her note climbed quickly to what for her was the climax of the huge disaster. "They were Americans!" So she confessed that limitation which a faulty imagination sets to our humanity — a limitation she had imagined she despised. "Americans they were, and innocent. I keep thinking most of the children. There were such lots of children, Gavan, on that boat. I kept seeing them all night long. I could hear their voices growing weaker —" her own failed her for a moment. And when she found it again, it was a different voice altogether, firm and bitter. "People say to me, 'the *Lusitania* was warned not to sail.'"

Yes, Napier had heard that was so.

"As if *that* could excuse — it's what Greta says. 'They were warned,' she keeps repeating. 'They disobeyed the warning.' The little children, the babies disobeyed the German warning! Oh-h!" The small tightened fist beat upon one knee to call back the self-control that threatened to desert her. "I've had a horrible morning with Greta. She — something has died in Greta. I'd been feeling ever since —" Again she broke off and seemed to seize upon comparative commonplace to steady her nerves. "It was true about her being married. She admitted it the day she read of Mr. Guedalla's death in the paper. She got some money. It was n't her not telling us she was married; it was other things. Oh, I've been

unhappy enough! But this — *this!* Gavan, I could n't get her to say it was horrible. She was n't even sorry. Oh, Gavan, *she was glad!*" The locked fingers writhed in her lap. She seemed not to know that she was weeping. "What do you think Greta said at last? 'It would be a lesson,' she said. A lesson! To torture and kill fifteen hundred innocent people. A lesson to the children! To little babies!" She turned her quivering face away a moment. "I think," she said under her broken breath — "I think I should have gone mad if you had n't come back. Oh, I 'm so glad you 're back!"

He simply had n't the courage at that moment to tell her he was going to sail for England the following day. He told her in a very gentle note sent late in the afternoon. They were to dine together.

She met him with steady looks.

"I 've cabled to Julian," she said immediately, "that I 'm coming back with you."

The *Parnassian* was to sail at ten.

Napier had stood outside the entrance to the dock, waiting for Nan, since ten minutes past nine. At twenty minutes to ten there she was at last.

"But where is your luggage?" he called out. He had warned her not to trust it to other hands. In that second before the cab drew alongside something in the face at the window prepared him for the answer. "That 's why I am late. I had to have everything taken off. And I tried to telephone you. Just as I was leaving — this came." She held a paper toward him as she got out of the cab. She stood there while he read:

I depend on your waiting till I come sailing to-day *Olympic*.
JULIAN.

As Napier looked up, speechless in that first moment, she whispered: "Serves me right. Greta said, I was running away." She put out her hand and steadied herself against the window-frame of the cab. "Where you 're going they shoot deserters, don't they! Well, I 've been shot. Oh, not fatally! just in the leg. Enough to stop me."

"You are going to wait for Julian?"

"What else is possible?" She hung her head. "He and the others, they 've depended on me. Well, they must not any more. And when he comes,"— her breast heaved as she brought it out,—"I shall tell him something else."

"Tell Julian! What shall you tell Julian?"

The lifted eyes were swimming.

"That it 's *you*. That to see you go without me breaks my heart."

"Nan!" he cried and pulled himself up with an effort that brought the blood into his face. Other passengers, arriving late, for all their own agitation at the prospect of some hitch in getting themselves and their baggage on board, stared back over their shoulders at the leave-taking out in the street.

Napier flung a "Wait!" to the cabman, and held his watch in one hand. "Come," he said and took Nan by the arm. He walked her a little way from the dock entrance.

"I think," he went on gravely, "I *would n't* tell Julian. You see, Nan, you 've got to consider that I may n't be coming back." He did n't look at her. "What 's the *use*

of telling Julian? Is n't there enough misery in the world without adding to it?"

"That 's what Julian and I think," she said, blurring her words. "Enough misery in the world without war. You never cared about that old misery as Julian did. And that 's what makes it so — so —not to be borne that you should feel you have to go and meet the new horror out there."

"Well, I do feel like that," he said.

"And yet it is n't any longer just duty. You want to go!" she cried. "I saw that yesterday when we talked about the *Lusitania*."

"Yes," he said grimly, "I want to go."

"Well, so do lots of my countrymen." And Napier could n't have told whether dismay or pride was dominant in the new note. His hand slipped down her arm and found her fingers. Napier's valet, Day, came running out of the dock-gates. He looked distractedly across the wide, open space before the slips.

"Yes!" Napier hailed him. "I 'll be there!" He gripped her hand hard before he let it go. "I 'll have to run for it. Good-by." On an impulse, whether mere instinct to cover his emotion or some obscurer working of the mind behind his wretchedness, he caught Julian's cable out of her hold. He held the paper in front of his misty eyes as he hurried toward the dock entrance. The hour the message had been sent from London struck him now for the first time. He halted suddenly. In a voice harsh with the effort to keep it steady he called back: "Did Greta know that you meant to go with me?"

"Yes," came the panting answer as the girl ran forward

a few steps. "I told her before I saw you that I could n't bear it over here any longer. And now you — you are leaving me!" She stopped.

"You 'll lose the boat, sir!" Day called out.

Napier's last vision of Nan Ellis showed the girl still standing there looking after him and sobbing openly in the street.

This cable, he knew now was no reply to Nan's. It was the reply to some message sent hours earlier by Greta von Schwarzenberg.

CHAPTER XXIV

NAPIER and Julian exchanged wireless messages as they passed each other on the high seas. "Nan is waiting for you in New York," was Napier's greeting.

When next Napier heard of either of them, he was in France; those two were together in America. Then he heard of Nan's being in London "for two weeks." Next she wrote him a line from New York: "Because Julian is overworked, and he's had horrid letters from home. Please write him something cheerful."

Napier responded to this invitation by sending a sealed packet through the foreign-office bag, giving a brief account of Greta von Schwarzenberg's more pernicious activities. He ended by commending Julian to Roderick Taylor for confirmation. The answer to this, anxiously waited for, came in the form of a truly Julianesque denunciation of all secret service: "As long as we employ spies we shall suffer from spies." Greta, according to Julian, had been alarmed and harried into associations alien to her nature. As to the incontestable fact that after being deported, she had slipped back to England and had crossed the ocean disguised as a Belgian, that was "our doing. If we go interfering with freedom of travel, we must expect—" For his own part, he was busied from morning till night about matters of major importance. He had no time for

fellows like Taylor. In some ways America was disappointing, but England was going from bad to worse.

From one and all of Julian's letters of that period Napier gathered that for refreshment in a very dusty time, Julian bathed his spirit in Nan Ellis's unfailing sympathy and faith. Driven and harassed as Julian was, alienated from his family, divided from old friends, with neither health nor energy to make new, he seemed able to wait for the girl's slow-forming inclination toward a closer relation, since as he wrote in his astonishing way —" since she is of such service to the work." Her special " service " seemed to be the going back and forth between London and New York.

Through all that trench nightmare compounded of dirt, physical and mental misery, and hourly danger, the bitter knowledge was pressed home that the being Gavan Napier loved best on earth was crossing and re-crossing the Atlantic on an errand he abhorred. An errand which he himself by putting the secret-service people on the track of Atlantic contraband, had changed from something safe and easy into something so difficult and so full of peril that he quailed before opening those letters of Julian's, which might tell of the failure, the detection, the arrest of the messenger.

From English sources, as the months went on, echoes reached Napier in the trenches of Mr. Julian Grant's writings and speeches on the other side of the Atlantic. These were utterances of such a character as to bring disaster upon certain persons in London held responsible for not foreseeing the inadvisability of allowing the notorious pacifist to cross the Atlantic.

It was at a time when Anglo-American relations had

suffered to the point of danger by the British authorities having held up American ships carrying supplies which would ultimately find their way through neutral countries to Germany. Whether owing to the fact that German propaganda in the United States was then at the height of its success, the war spirit called to life by the *Lusitania* disaster languished during a protracted interchange of Notes between the United States and the Central powers.

Nan was as poor a letter-writer as Julian was admirable. One of her meager little missives reached Napier soon after the so-called "great advance" which toward the end of September, 1915, gained a fragment of French soil about Loos at colossal cost.

"I want you to know," she wrote, "that I 've been learning these last months in New York what the triumphs of German methods would mean for the world. Here, in the midst of all this luxury and waste, I 've come to envy loss and sacrifice. If we in America don't get our share of it, I don't know what is to become of us." And then, from the passionate patriot, that passing mock at "America, from a safe distance, distributing victuals and justice to people giving up their lives."

Looking back, after all the turmoil and tragedy had gone by, Napier realized, as clearly as though he had been an eye-witness, the despair that fell on Julian when he heard from her own lips that Nan was "against what Germany stands for. I want my country to be against it," she wrote Napier, "and there seems to be only one way. It is n't, not yet, the way of peace. Well, there it is. I have failed Julian in the work he cares more about than

anything in the world. I say to myself, I won't fail him in other ways if I can help it. What do you say, Gavan?"

Before there was time to "say," Napier had received his two wounds, a shell-shattered foot and a damaged right wrist. He was sent home, and for six-and-thirty days lay chafing in a London hospital. The time hung horribly. Most of Napier's friends were in active service or dead; the rest were swamped in work. He'd have gone out of his mind, he said afterward, if it had n't been for Tommy Durrant. Tommy, with his eye-glass and his pre-war elegance unimpaired, his alertness and sound sense increased by new responsibilities, was still behind the old scenes and in and out of the new as well. He had been "lent" to the Admiralty Intelligence Department. Tommy was full of the increasing difficulty in Anglo-American relations. One day he came in full of "a scheme we've just put through"— a scheme talked of with a careless air, but in a voice carefully modulated.

"That woman on the other side who used to be at the McIntyres'— came back as a Belgian nun after we'd deported her, you know — well, your friend in New York, Taylor, has traced a beastly lot of trouble to her and her gang. For months Taylor's kept telling our people over here it was childish to go straining every nerve to keep the American balance from tipping the wrong way, pouring out money, losing prestige, above all, losing time, while we leave people like Schwarzenberg and her nest of adders to breed their poison —"

"What can we do?" Napier interrupted, hopeless of the answer.

"Get her out of that."

"Out of America?"

Tommy nodded with such vigor his eye-glass fell out.

"I admit it'll be damned difficult, but Singleton," he said, replacing the monocle firmly once more—"Singleton thinks he's found the way." Then, in the deepest confidence, Tommy told Napier about an ex-German spy, one Ernst Pforzheim, who'd had relations with the Schwarzenberg woman. "He'd done a lot of useful work in America as well as here, but Singleton had got our people to tell him they were n't satisfied. There was really only one thing they wanted of Pforzheim, and he had n't done it. He'd already told the chief there were special reasons why he, Pforzheim, of all people in the world, should n't touch this Schwarzenberg business. The chief could n't see it.

"'But I'm *dead!*" wails Pforzheim.

"'You've got to come alive,' the chief grinned. But you never in your life saw a man as depressed as that German when he heard he was somehow or other to find a way to rid us of Schwarzenberg.

"'To rid you of her?' he says, his eyes bulging. 'She's a deal more likely to rid you of me.'

"The chief looked as if he could bear that, but he said all he insisted on was that she should be got out of America. No power under heaven, Pforzheim told him, would tempt Schwarzenberg to leave America.

"'You set me an impossible task!' he wept.

"'It's the condition,' says the chief.

"'It's my death-sentence,' says Pforzheim. That was how he went off."

For the next three weeks, whenever Tommy appeared, Napier would ask, as though Ernst Pforzheim, too, were in hospital, how that person was "getting on."

Though Tommy was forever full of other news, all that he was able to produce relating to the luckless Ernst was that he'd disappeared.

Napier had n't succeeded in getting his letters forwarded from France in those terrible days. After four weeks in hospital he cabled Julian what had happened and that he was getting on all right. A fortnight later, the day of Napier's discharge, came a telegram from New York.

Returning with Nan to-morrow. *S. S. Leyden.* JULIAN.

Not altogether by the ways that would have seemed most direct, not solely through the principals concerned, did Napier come by his most intimate knowledge of what happened on that voyage, which was for many to be the last. From his long familiarity with the way Julian "took things"; from familiarity, not long, but lit by the lamp of passion, with the natural turns and reactions of Nan Ellis, Napier filled in the outlines of the widely published and privately rehearsed story, until to him, the lover on shore, the experiences of that voyage wore an actuality denied to many of those who in their own persons lived out the awful hours. As it accumulated, this knowledge of Napier's came to be of that completer type that some of us cherish concerning matters in which our sharing has been of the kind invisible. We were not "there" in any ordinary sense. Yet indubitably we are more intensely there, in that we are not blinded by panic or numbed by

the mental or the bodily blow. We, aloof in the conning-towers of love, are spared no sight, no pang. We look down with every natural sense sharpened; with some perceptions, called as yet supernatural, giving voices to the silence and to the darkness vision. But apart from these less generally recognized avenues of information, there were the great outstanding facts which filled the papers of two hemispheres.

The first six days of the *Leyden's* voyage were, from the steamship company's point of view, wholly uneventful. Mr. Julian Grant had come on board obviously far from well. The reporters who interviewed him just before he sailed remarked upon the fact. Hallett Newcomb, a middle-aged Englishman of letters, returning home upon conclusion of an extended lecture tour, who had some pre-war acquaintance with Mr. Grant and yet more with Gavan Napier, had been struck at once by the change. Julian Grant's litheness had become fragility, almost emaciation. He walked with the old briskness, but as under a load. Those little lines slanting away from each side of the mustache should have taken the antique pencil another ten years to grave. Grant had n't yet given his life in the Great War, but of a surety he had given his youth. It was gone forever. In those bright Indian-summer days that followed he would lie bundled up in his deck-chair while hour after hour, in that low, comforting voice, the girl who was his traveling companion read to him. The passengers commented on a supposed likeness between the two, though there was little in it beyond a common delicacy of feature and identity of coloring. People on the *Leyden,* according to Newcomb, took the pair at first for

brother and sister. Anyway, she treated him like a brother, a younger brother who was to be soothed and cared for.

The matter in those books and papers that Mr. Grant seemed never to have enough of was not such stuff as would have soothed the British censor. However, it stirred to enthusiasm the frequent visitor to that sheltered nook on the deck — Miss Genevieve Sherman, as the forged passport gave out Miss Ellis's fascinating black-haired friend. To the fact that Miss Ellis did n't seem to know the lady was her friend, Mr. Hallett Newcomb was an unwilling witness. He had chanced to see the younger woman making her escape from the other on deck, only to be trapped in the cul-de-sac corridor at the bottom of which was Newcomb's cabin. Behind the half-hooked-back door he was looking through his papers for a registered cable address. The tête-à-tête outside began so quietly that he had for those first moments no sense of hearing anything private.

"So you did n't expect to see me," said Miss Genevieve Sherman whom the girl called Greta.

"How in the world could I expect such a thing?"

"Why not?"

"Why not! For the reason that sends my heart into my mouth when I realize only a little of"— the girl's voice hesitated —"of what you must know far more. The risk, Greta, the awful risk!"

"It 's dear of you"— the heavier voice was caressing — "*dear* of you to keep thinking of that. And you 're a clever child to have spotted me at once."

"Clever? I 've seen you as so many people by now, I think I 've got down at last to the things you can't change."

The weight of sadness in the words brought out one of the woman's challenging laughs.

"I gather that what you think the essential me does n't make you very gay, dear child."

The dear child said nothing.

"You should n't be surprised to see me here, running some risk it 's useless to deny; but after the way we parted, what else could you expect?"

"Greta, you have n't come because of — not really because of me?"

"You 've never realized," said the appealing voice, "what you were to me."

There was a longer pause and then, half choked, two little sentences fell out: "It all seems no good any more. I shall never feel the same."

"Not the *same,* perhaps. You may feel something better, closer. Anyhow, I could n't let you go away, to the other side of the world without — Why, Nan you did n't even answer my letters!"

"I could n't."

"*Could n't?*"

"There was n't any more to say."

"That 's where you 're wrong. There *is* more to say. And that 's one reason why I 'm here —"

Newcomb slammed down the top of his portmanteau and rattled his keys.

Any ill success she may have had with the girl did not prevent Miss Greta from seizing every opportunity to work on the sympathies of the gentleman, above all, to ally herself with his international ideals. "You and I" was a phrase which Newcomb often caught as he strolled by;

"from our point of view," was another. One of the impressions that was to remain longest, because so often renewed during the week at sea, was the group of which Grant remained the center; he lying spent, in his chair; Miss Ellis in another, finger in book and eyes lowered; while on the other side of him sat Miss Greta, suave, smiling, talking to Mr. Grant, but turning ingratiatingly every now and then to the girl, only to be met by that refusal of the eyes even more marked than the blankness of her silence.

Miss Greta did not continue to take this irresponsiveness well. Behind the continued and tireless effort her mood hardened, her resentment grew.

Newcomb could see that much, though she pretended with some success to make up for any disappointment, and more than make up, by turning the head of a lanky American youth.

The source of Mr. Craig Ashmole's attraction baffled Newcomb till he found out the young man's business: Mr. Ashmole was on his way to England to fill a telegraphy post. Two days out from New York one of the *Leyden's* wireless operators had taken to his bed; Mr. Ashmole was now installed as deputy assistant. The carroty and myopic youth was not above twenty-three and very keen about his job. He knew it well in its scientific, if not in its political, aspect; and he knew women not at all. Miss Greta's amused effort to fill up this hiatus in his education afforded no less amusement to certain lookers-on at the little comedy, as they thought it.

This was not the view of the one or two who knew the persistent fight made by the lady, that first day out, for

the privilege of receiving wireless messages. Under the new rule no one had access to outside news except specially privileged official persons. It was doubtful if the rule held good after Miss Greta had publicly flouted more personable men in favor of the deputy-assistant operator. At carefully chosen times and, for the most part, in out-of-the-way corners she flirted outrageously with the absurd Ashmole. She dazed him, she dazzled him, she rattled him, she pumped him. She raised him to heaven, she reduced him to despair. She comforted him till he saw stars on the blackest night.

It was Saturday, and they had been six days at sea. But for the fact that the captain had gone ninety miles out of his course for some good reason of his own, they might, before the light of that day failed, have been sighting the round towers on the Irish coast.

The usual restlessness of the last hours of a voyage, when people alternately pack and write letters, or pack and feverishly cement new friendships and pack, was augmented by the fact of each passenger finding in his cabin late that afternoon a card on which appeared the sinister legend, "In case of need your boat is—" and a number followed. The very calmness of the information, its manner of conveyance, increased the eeriness of the warning.

Was it the lifeboat-card which those two, Grant and Miss Ellis, were discussing with that absorbed intensity?

When Newcomb had finished his four miles with the second officer and the congressman from Vermont, he came to a stop by Grant's corner in time to hear the girl break into the middle of something he was saying and urge

Grant to go below. He was to try to sleep off his headache; anyway, "make up a little for loss of rest before — before —" she stumbled and looked away an instant. A world of trouble was in the face she turned again to watch the slight figure go swaying down the deck and catch at the jamb of the door to steady himself an instant before he disappeared into the companionway. He had left a book open on his rug. On the deck, all around his chair, lay the modern exemplars of that literature of peace which seems, like the old, to bring the sword.

Newcomb's eye roved once again over titles in English and German, and from the scattered incrimination he looked at the face of the girl.

"I seem to have noticed that these sentiments don't stir you to much enthusiasm."

"They are worthy of enthusiasm," she answered, as though parrying an attack on Julian behind his back.

"Why do you make phrases?" Newcomb demanded.

"I don't." Whether her quickened look sprang from a pricked conscience Newcomb could n't be sure. "Well, *are n't* they full"— her eyes swept the litter of books and papers —"*full* of fine and splendid things? You know they are. Only —"

"Only?"

She drew herself up, and the tight-pressed lips parted to say: "However much we believe them, if the house was on fire, we could n't think about these things. The house *is* on fire. I can't think about — anything except saving the house and the people who are being burnt."

"Does n't Mr. Grant tell you that those are exactly *his* aims —'to save the house' and 'to save the people'?"

"Yes," she owned sadly; "he thinks about saving everything except himself." She stopped abruptly, frightened at having made an admission which may have implied much or little. She studied Newcomb a moment with a gaze that made him long to say: "Yes, believe in me. Why should n't you?"

Whether the silent monition reached her, certainly her next words showed no agitation, rather, a queer, poised sagacity.

"What I sit here thinking," she went on, "is that maybe a stupid fireman, even a bad, lying fireman, could 'save the house' where Julian — Julian would only be burnt to death with the rest."

As though acting on sudden impulse, Newcomb brought out the question he had been longing to put all these days.

"Do you mind my asking you why are you leaving home at a time when traveling is, to say the least —" In the pause he said to himself: She won't trust me. Why should she — except for the difference it had seemed to make to her when she learned that he was a friend not only of Grant's, but of Gavan Napier's. In the first days they had talked about Napier.

"I 've come," she said after a moment —"I 've come because, do what I would, I could n't prevent Mr. Grant's coming."

"I see. You would n't be on this ship if Mr. Grant were n't."

She hesitated again.

"You can see how ill he is, and his coming to America and getting deeper into — all this, holding those meetings

and being so attacked about them at home, that 's my doing."

"*Your* doing!" said Newcomb, giving astonishment the rein.

"Yes. If I had n't written to him — the things I did write, he would n't have come to America."

"What things?"

"I can't tell anybody that. But it 's because I did n't do something I 'd promised, that 's why Julian 's here. Since there are things I *can't* do, it 's my business to do what I can." Very wisely Newcomb sat silent; she, too, as long as she could bear it. "I 've told you this,— you see how private it is,— but I 've told you because —" Her voice clouded. She turned away her head.

"Is n't it because you realize that I 'd like to be of some use if I could?"

"Would you — *could* you help about him — about Mr. Grant?"

Newcomb's moment of silence unnerved her.

"Oh, if you *knew* how we all tried to keep him in America!"

"Would n't he have stayed," Newcomb dared to ask, "if you had stayed?"

"No! no! Oh, you don't understand Julian. He has a duty — to the other men at home and to the country. He thinks he can help; you 've heard him. 'While some men, who see it that way, are fighting for liberty abroad, it 's laid on others to fight for liberty at home.' I could almost be glad he is so ill if only we had landed and I could get him home to Scotland! I did n't know whether you might, perhaps, be willing to help me to do that."

"Willing? I would indeed be willing. The question is: my power, anybody's power."

She bent forward, but the breath that should have gone in words she held an instant. And then very low the syllables fell out: "What will they do — when we land?"

"What will they do?"

"Yes, to Julian."

"I don't know."

"You have n't the least idea? Well, Julian has. He 's been telling me, preparing me this afternoon."

"What has he been telling you?"

"That — these — these are his last hours as a free man." She dropped the ghost of a sob into the silence, and her head went down into her hands. It was only for a second. She sat erect again. "What he 's been saying in America is enough, he thinks. Do *you* think that 's enough to put a very noble person in prison in free England?"

Newcomb had n't often wanted more to do anything than he wanted now to reassure her. It should be accounted to him for righteousness that he said: "I don't know."

CHAPTER XXV

AT dinner that last night, the place of the wireless youth was vacant. So was the place of the Dutch official next Lady Neave, whom they called Lady Gieve, because during the first days she had worn her jacket of that name, deflated, but evident, all day and, according to report, all night. Half-way across the Atlantic she had been smiled out of her fears to the extent of carrying the life-preserver over her arm.

Miss Ellis was the only person who took no part in discussing the rumor which ran about the ship of a wireless message said to have been received by the Dutch official. His bedroom steward, also Dutch, had seen the message — "A great battle and a German defeat."

The news accounted beyond doubt for the increased noisiness in the dining saloon. From the table behind Newcomb rose excited ac nts, "*Es ist unglaüblich!*"

Newcomb turned, and ught Miss Ellis's eye. He had changed his place to the en ty one beside her after hearing that Mr. Grant was n't comi down —"a headache."

"The wireleless leakage see s to have let loose a fair amount of *furor Teutonicus*," he aid.

She nodded; plainly she had heard the news. But she did n't want to discuss it at a board where old Professor Mohrenheim and his gentle, kindly wife occupied their

places, as polite as ever, but restrained and preoccupied tonight. Voices from the all-German table rose louder.

It was known that on the last voyage excitement over some war news, published in the customary small weekly, had led to a riot. Certain offended patriots, among both Germans and their opponents, had been brought to port in irons. This was the first crossing during which no newspaper had been issued, and no wireless telegrams had appeared on the notice-board. The wisdom of these measures was abundantly proved. The mere breath of rumor had transformed the ship's company. Allies put their heads together and exulted. Neutrals argued more or less openly, betraying in every word the impossibility of neutrality. The old German couple at the end of Nan's table sat marooned. They glanced now and then, wistfully, at the all-German table next them. The sound of their tongue rumbled and clashed above the jar of crockery and service metal.

"Is n't it strange,"— Nan leaned to Newcomb as she lowered her voice,—"when I *used* to hear German, I 'd think about music and poetry and beautiful words like *Waldesduft* —"

"And what do you think about now — words like Belgium?"

"That is n't fair," she said quietly. "All war is awful."

"But I 'd like to know what you do think about, then, instead of music and *Waldesduft.*"

"No."

He urged her. "Please!"

"I could n't, not at the same table where that dear old

couple sit," she said quickly and glanced down the long table at the Mohrenheims.

"Tell me up-stairs?"

She shook her head.

"I don't think I shall even up-stairs. If, as I believe, the worst stories are n't true, it 's wrong to repeat them."

"Why is it wrong to tell me and let me judge if I am to believe?"

But she would n't. "To repeat them gives them a false trueness," she said in that careful undertone. "Oh, I can't explain; but just to put them into words seems to spread a poison."

"You can't trust me to distinguish, to help you to distinguish?"

Again she shook her head. "What I have to think is, if some people, mistaken people, believed such things about us Americans, what would I say if I were asked whether I thought it a good thing that the false stories against us should be repeated? To make horrible pictures in people's brains; and, if the brains are weak, to turn them."

"I am sorry my brains inspire you with such distrust."

"Perhaps it 's my own I 'm shaky about. But I don't believe any brain can keep steady under some stories. No; must n't think about them."

"She gets that from Grant," Newcomb decided. He looked across the table. Next the captain's empty place, sat the only person in the saloon unmoved, you would say, by the news — a British naval officer, grave, monosyllabic, and showing just that same face throughout the voyage. Not so much as a hint about his errand to the States and little enough about anything else. Until the fourth night

out he had slept or dozed over a book. The only five minutes during which he had appeared really awake had been when some one in the smoking-room repeated Julian Grant's asseveration that the German atrocity stories were "faked." "Every nation tells of its enemy. Only the ignorant and unthinking are taken in."

It was then that the officer dozing in the corner lifted that face of his, with its hard, fine outline like a profile on an old coin, and came to life. The indifference cleared out of his eyes as low-hung, slumbering smoke will clear before the blast.

"If to be taken in by 'faked' stories was *all* that the innocent had to fear!" In cold accents he told about a Belgian girl. Daughter of an officer in the Belgian Army, a man he knew. When the Germans took Antwerp she was carried off. Fell into the hands of a U-boat captain. When he'd done with her, handed her over to his crew. She didn't die quickly enough. They threw her overboard. "An officer's daughter!" he repeated, as though that were the culminating point of the horror.

Some one repeated the story to Julian. His anger was a thing no one would forget. *Believe* it? Such stories were told for a purpose. It was "the kind of poison that infects people's wits and loses them their souls. Makes brute beasts out of humans. There are minds that batten on such lies. They get decent people to listen in the fevered, abnormal state all nerves are in nowadays. Foulness that would be choked back down their obscene throats at other times, it's listened to like some message out of Sinai or Olympus. I tell you the German U-boat captains are as good men as ever the hag War breeds. They *must*

be men of character. You dare n't give a job like that to a drunken, rotten roué."

Here was Miss Greta at last, never so late before and never so resplendent. Silver sequins and black lace for that last night.

"I 'm glad"— she spoke to a lady across the table — "glad to see you 've emancipated yourself."

"Emancipated — how?" Lady Neave asked.

"You 've broken the tyranny of the Gieve jacket."

"Don't tell me I 've —" Lady Neave turned to look at the back of her chair —"yes, gone and forgotten it!" She moved outward on her swiveled seat.

"No! no!" The congressman from Vermont protested there was no need to prepare for anything so grotesque, so melodramatic, as a cold-blooded attempt to sink this poor old tub.

Miss Greta held high her braid-crowned head. "This innocent old tub," she said, "has carried thousands of tons of ammunition; but," she added relentingly, "I don't think Lady Gieve — oh, forgive me! I mean Lady Neave," she bent gracious brows upon her opposite neighbor,—"I *quite* agree you won't need your packet on this voyage."

No one answered. In the midst of a general animation, the silence that reigned again around Greta spoke loud. She stared about her.

"What has become of the hors d'œuvres?" she demanded. The Dutch steward could not have helped hearing. He went on serving the others. Again she spoke to him, more sharply still.

"Alvays it ees somet'ing! From de fir-rst you come on board," he muttered incoherently.

She turned round in her seat.

"What? *What* do you say?"

"Vhat I say? You need not be down on me because Zhermany is beat."

Miss Greta stared.

"Germany beaten! You must be mad."

The steward's face had grown red; his anger was mounting still.

"I get it straight," he said. "Dere vas a great battle. De English and French have beat de Zhermans."

"It is a lie!"

"How do you know that?" asked the calm voice of Newcomb at Greta's side.

"How does one know anything? You would n't expect me to consider the possibility of such a thing just because" — her contempt followed the steward for those first yards of his progress toward the side table —"because *that* sort of creature says so?" She looked round for understanding. Something in the averted eyes of the company nettled her. "He says it, *armer Wurm,*" she went on with her head high, "from the same motives that make others long to believe it. Jealousy."

"Do we understand you to say," Newcomb asked, "that you would n't believe news, however authentic, of a German defeat?"

"There *could n't* be authentic news of a German defeat. If it came from some one I knew and trusted, if all the people I know and trust combined to say there had been a German defeat, I should know they were wrong."

While she waited for the hors d'œuvres, her handsome shoulders thrown back, her chin high, she pronounced a

pæan to Kultur cum militarism. Newcomb construed it as a letting off pent-up steam, a vent for anger against Miss Ellis and against the gathering cloud of enemies. But it was also something more. It had in it an element of fanaticism, mixed with balked passion for force. A reckless joy in the doctrine of stick-at-nothing to serve the end. With such an accent we have heard some one very old, or very young and weak saying, "*We* bombed them out of the wood," or, "*We* took Hill 60." It is a singular thing in psychology and yet to be explored, this passion on the part of the physically weaker for those very brute forces in the universe which, but for their opposites, would be the sure undoing of all but the physically strongest, and, in the end, of them as well.

In the midst of her hymn to pro-Teutonism, Ashmole came in, looking more idiotic than usual, staring about out of his big glasses as though he could n't recognize the table.

"Here we are," Miss Greta hailed him.

The youth paused by her chair an instant and mumbled something unintelligible, his eyes goggling as they swept the saloon.

"They told me the captain was down here."

Greta took hold of Ashmole's arm and tried in vain to pull him into the vacant place. He stood there lost while she whispered. Suddenly he bent and whispered back. They had done too much whispering in these last days for that to strike any one as specially strange. What struck Newcomb was the effect on Miss Greta of whatever it was Ashmole had said.

On the face that had met with brazen defiance the news of a German defeat, was stamped something more than consternation. Ashmole's own nerves were not so shaken, but he saw that.

"It 's all right," he said in the act of turning from her; "they won't get us. The lights are all out."

"Lights out, you say!" Greta had risen.

"Every port covered," Ashmole muttered over his shoulder.

"Fools! They must put the lights on. Do you hear? Instantly!" She clutched her chair back. "*This* is n't the boat they want —"

Nan had risen, too. But that was because she saw Julian at the door of the saloon. Without a word he held up his hand. Equally without sound, she slipped away from the table and went toward the waiting figure. As she reached the door, a dull sound came, with a long shuddering. It passed through the ship from end to end. Instead of the echo of that detonation setting the whole place instantly in motion, it had the effect of stilling for those first seconds such motion as had been. Several hundred tongues ceased wagging. Forks and spoons remained, arrested, half-way to people's mouths. The waiters stood, dish-covers in their hands, or bottles lifted to fill glass. The very engines slowed to listen.

Even after the general movement began in the saloon, it was quiet movement and curiously undramatic; no crying out, no mad rush for the deck.

Some people looked about as if for information. Others tried to smile.

"It 's come," said the congressman.

"What — *what* has come?" demanded Lady Neave through the rising hum.

Out of all the growing murmur and movement Newcomb heard Greta's tense whisper: "*That* — a torpedo?"

The captain's order traveled with a superhuman quickness:

"Life-belts first! Women and children to the boats!"

"Plenty of time for everybody to get a life-belt," was another form that ran from mouth to mouth. Whether that insistence calmed the people, certainly it was a strangely well-behaved company that made its way, in spite of the ship's increasing list to starboard, along corridors and up companionways. Scarcely a breach in the general self-control till, on the lifeboat-deck, parties were broken up, and all men told to stand back. Though the great majority accepted the order in silence, it broke the courage of some among the women. Certain men tried persuasion. There were dumb partings; there was agonized resistance. Two or three evidently meant to stand out to the bitter end against being saved, or lost, apart from their menfolk. For a minute the morale of the crowd was in grave danger. A young wife's recurrent sob: "I can't! I can't!" rose to wildness with, "They 'll have to kill me first!"

Newcomb, looking vainly about for Nan Ellis, saw a different face. Oh, yes, it belonged to that voice he had been hearing under all the rest, patient, gentle, tireless — the voice saying now in its foreign-sounding English "It is for your husband's safety that you go first." More than

the words, the motherly kindness on the blunt-featured face of the old German lady, prevailed upon the distracted girl. She let go her husband's arm and clung to Mrs. Mohrenheim.

Newcomb saw now that it was Mrs. Mohrenheim who was helping the ship's officers to marshal and send forward the women and children to those who had charge of the boats. It looked as if the task would have been too much for the officers but for Mrs. Mohrenheim. An extraordinary vigor, an exalted persuasiveness, had transformed the heavy figure and the homely face. Something she had given no hint of during the voyage came out of hiding and "took charge."

In spite of the increased listing of the ship, through all his own excitement and personal fear, which Newcomb afterwards confessed, his habit of mechanical mental registry kept him vividly aware of what went on within his range.

Already, while Mrs. Mohrenheim was still dealing with that first and most unwilling of the young wives, Newcomb had seen Miss Greta pass. It had n't taken her long to fling on a serge skirt and her fur-lined ulster. Above the life-belt fastened round her bulky figure was a brown canvas ruck-sack hoisted high against her shoulder-blades. She was fastening the buckles as she hastened toward her appointed boat, put a little out of her stride by the ever-stronger list to starboard. All the same, Miss Greta, beyond a doubt, would be among the first, Newcomb told himself to take her appointed place, and hers would be the first boat launched.

"You will carry the child for this lady?"

Mrs. Mohrenheim had thrust a baby into Newcomb's arms.

"They say it's this way — this way!" The baby's mother, holding a little boy by the hand, hurried the child and Newcomb up the deck. The barrier of officers, stewards, and crew opened to let them through.

Yes, Miss Greta was already in the boat. The woman with the little boy was helped in, and Newcomb handed over the baby. The men at the pulleys began to lower the boat. Miss Greta was calmly tying a motor-veil round her cap.

Up on the bridge the captain, against a star-strewn sky, calling down orders, gave an impression of such tragic and awful loneliness that Newcomb was aware of a relief at seeing him joined by another figure. The two stood speaking while you might count seven or eight; then the captain pulled off his coat and exchanged with the captain of the watch. The captain of the watch came running down, putting on his chief's coat. He took charge of the next boat that was being lowered. That was the boat that tilted and hung for some seconds over the water at an angle of forty-five degrees. The angle increased to the perpendicular, and the boat whirled round, dropping the people into the oily water. The calm night air struck icily on Newcomb's sweat-beaded forehead. A horror of violent death had pierced the numbness that followed on his first panic. On the way back to the diminishing crowd of women he peered into men's faces.

"Do they realize?" he kept repeating to himself.

"Where were you when it struck us?" he heard some one ask an officer.

"Chart-room," was the curt reply.

Another voice as Newcomb passed said: "Not the periscope; but I saw the shark-fin wake of the torpedo."

Newcomb walked with difficulty, like a drunken man; it was this damned list. The most violent tossing in a hurricane was preferable. You'd have the plunging dive and recovery, which had something gallant in it, almost playful, like a giant gamboling. But this persistent violation of equilibrium got on a man's nerve.

"The lights have gone out on the starboard side," some one said.

Newcomb pulled out his watch. Stopped! He held it to his ear. No, it was going. And all this had happened in those few beggarly moments!

"What's that yelling about?" he asked irritably of a couple of men who, half-doubled, came up the slant by the wireless-room passage.

"Boat on the other side — smashed like an egg-shell against the hull."

People were drowning on both sides of the sinking ship.

"It's often safest on board," some one said.

"Yes; you stick to the ship."

There was now a dense crowd of men round the companionway. All but a handful of women had been distributed to the boats, but the handful kept on being renewed. Newcomb saw why. Grant and Miss Ellis, among others, were bringing up the people who remained over, in the second and third class. And among these huddled groups still the squat figure and the beautiful-ugly face of old Mrs. Mohrenheim moved, consoling, heartening.

"Yes, he will come after," she said. "Surely you will think about your children." More than once she had taken her text from a bystander's face. "Look at him, poor man! He can save himself if he has not you to think about. You would not risk his life? No, no. *Komm,* then, *komm.*" The woman was passed along.

The mere getting to the boats was a trial of courage. Newcomb himself had no love of the horrible chute that now pitched sharply down to that dark, oily glitter that was the sea, but he offered to convoy the late-comers wherever a boat might be.

"No, you two." Mrs. Mohrenheim summoned Grant and Nan Ellis. Slowly they made their way forward with the little group of clinging children and bewildered women. Some crawled on hands and knees up the steep acclivity to where a boat swung from the davits. An officer passed the groups without stopping. He came hurrying, sliding, half squatting, with one leg stretched slanting down, the other crooked up, with the knee turned sharply out.

"You, now," he said to Mrs. Mohrenheim as he rose to his full height beside her.

"There are two ladies more." She pushed them forward.

The officer steadied them as they passed, and turned again to Mrs. Mohrenheim.

"*You.*"

"There are those by the door; one is young." She turned unsteadily.

The officer clutched her. "I tell you,"—Newcomb barely caught the words—"it's now or never. *There are n't boats enough!*"

"I know," said Mrs. Mohrenheim.

She drew back and stretched out a hand to a muffled figure holding to a stanchion above where she stood. It was Professor Mohrenheim. Newcomb realized now that the figure had been there from the first.

"We have been together for forty years," the old woman said. "Too long to be parted now." Her husband bent down and took her hand. Now he had drawn her up beside him.

A man with bare feet and a blanket round him rushed on deck as word came, blown along from group to group, "The captain says every one for'ard, and each for himself."

Down by the bridge they were launching a collapsible raft.

The last Newcomb, or any one, saw of the Mohrenheims, they were standing together. They held to each other and to the stanchion.

Grant followed the girl down the swinging ladder to the raft.

Some one was crying:

"Get away! Pull out! For God's sake, get away!" Another, equally unrecognizable in the dimness, called out:

"She's going down! We'll be drawn in!"

As they pushed off, they saw the electric lights on the *Leyden* go out one by one.

Of the people on the raft more than one watched the death-throes of the ship with wet eyes, as though she were something sentient, human. Her angle of subsidence had changed sharply. The bow sank, leaving the stern nearly

upright. Her mast was gone. For an instant her funnel lay along the water, and then with a dull roar as of the engines breaking loose and crashing down to the bottom, the rest of the *Leyden* sank out of sight.

The end of the great ship had come with a horrible quietness, in contrast to the cries of men struggling for their lives in the wash among the wreckage.

The captain had gone down with the ship. When those in charge of the raft heard that some one had seen him jump clear, they sent up a rocket. By that addition to the starlight, for a few instants a single, half-empty lifeboat could be seen rocking violently on the swell. Several men were clinging to the gunwale. As raft and boat were swept nearer, the officer in charge of the raft raised a shout. He had recognized the captain climbing into the boat, and hauling up after him the limp body of one of his companions.

The captain's first care, when he came alongside, was to relieve the congestion on the raft. He ordered the chief engineer to transfer eight or ten. The chief engineer remembered his helpers. Grant and Newcomb were told off. Yes, the captain said, they must bring the only woman into the lifeboat.

When the transference had been effected, another rocket was sent up in order that the surviving boats might come together.

"Look!" The girl grasped Grant's arm.

The captain, too, turned his head.

"By God!" he said.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE submarine had risen and stood away to southward. So intent had the occupants of the lifeboat been to discover some sign of their companions that the discovery of themselves by the submarine flash came with a shock of surprise. In the light of that pale ray, which had picked them out of the darkness, they saw in that first moment no more than one another's faces — a memory to last them all their days.

"They're hailing us," the captain said with bitter mouth.

"*Who* is hailing us?" The idea of rescue was still in the forefront of his mind.

"Submarine."

How the captain knew, Newcomb had no idea. But certainly the insignificant, low-pitched shadow — obscure mother of the light-ray . . . she was moving! And she was moving in the direction of the *Leyden's* grave.

A voice came from her at last, uttering not the German they thought to hear, but words yet more unfamiliar.

"He says," interrupted the Dutch captain, "we're to come 'longside."

"Shall we?" The chief engineer still could conceive orders as coming only from the autocrat of the ship at the bottom of the sea.

"No choice." The captain's voice sank lower on an

oath. He leaned forward, and conferred with the men at the bow. Newcomb had noticed that the captain still wore the coat of the captain of the watch, and he saw now that when the grizzled head that had been bent in conference with the engineer, was lifted, it wore a landsman's cap — a checked deerstalker.

Clearly the engineer had been placed in command of this little expedition over the intervening blackness to learn their fate — a blackness that seemed to open to the long ray of the flash-light. To the unnautical mind, the shortened ray seemed to draw the lifeboat in and in, till the conning-tower stood clear to the straining eye; in and in, till to the right of the main origin of light dim figures took shape; in and in, till just before the oarsmen had brought the lifeboat alongside the shelving body, topped with its low deck, suddenly the light ray was extinguished. Lifeboat and submarine swung an instant in an equal blackness. Out of it a voice, again in those strange accents. No answer till an English tongue spoke from the lifeboat, "We can understand a little German."

And then, just as eyes were beginning to grow accustomed to the dark, which, after all, was darkness only by comparison, the compact figure standing out on the conning-tower against the star-sown sky turned on the light of an electric torch he held in his hand. He trailed the sudden radiance along the lifeboat, raking her fore and aft. The light lingered an instant at the stern. But the question he asked was: "Name of your ship?"

He was told.

"Dutch?"

Holland-American, she was.

"Tonnage?"

That was given, too."

"Are you the captain?"

"No. Chief Engineer Van Zandt."

An order was issued in German, and the interrogatory went on:

"Where *is* the captain?"

"Hard to say," some one answered gruffly.

"He 's where a British captain can usually be found," said another.

"In these days that 'usually' means at the bottom," retorted the commander of the submarine. "Have you got any papers?"

"*Papers?*"

"Yes, yes, *Dummheit;* where are the ship's papers?"

"We 'd better ask you," retorted a voice at the stern.

"You 'd better keep the tongue civil!" came sharply back, with the first betrayal of flaw in the perfect English.

Two figures coming up on the conning-tower brought with them the diffused light of some open hatchway as they took their stand behind the commander. He showed clearly now, a firm, square-built presence, a beardless round face above the muffler. He said something over his shoulder, and one of the two men just come up, stepped briskly to the commander's side. During those few seconds it seemed mere chance that the torch still lit up the stern of the lifeboat — lit the small, white face with its parted lips and shining eyes, a face so destitute of fear, so charged with sheer burning curiosity, that any sane person might be forgiven for staring hard at what could only be a crass incapacity on a girl's part to comprehend the situation.

"How many boats did you launch?" the brusk voice went on with the catechism.

The engineer decided to say eight.

"That all? Why did n't you launch more?"

"No time."

"No *time!* That shows you 're lying." He turned again and conferred with the little group behind him.

"*Ja, ja — auch meine Meinung.*" He wheeled round. "All right," he called out; "shove off!"

Nobody in the lifeboat moved.

Grant's voice was heard for the first time after the second of stark silence:

"What are you going to do with the people in this boat?"

"Finished with you. Shove off!"

That loosed tongues. The boat was full of angry voices. Grant's alone, steady, quiet, but heard above them all, said:

"It 's a mistake, then? — Wait a moment!" — he rose and steadied himself in the gentle swell — "I say! — it 's a mistake, then, that we 're a hundred miles from land?"

"Not much mistake about *that,*" the voice came back.

"Are we to wait while you overhaul the other boats?"

"Why should you wait?"

"You mean to round the others up and give us a tow?"

"Oh, do I?"

Again the commander repeated that action of his, tilting the torch so as to show up the pale oval with the eager eyes.

Newcomb readily owned afterward that the sharp collision of emotions in those minutes during the interview put out of the question any sober thinking or coördination of impressions. All that came later. But in the flux of

feeling he knew even at the time that his peculiar loathing of the man was n't altogether due to the devilish work he had finished, or fear of what was yet to come. Even in the thick of shifting dreads and hates Newcomb knew that moment by moment, ever since the colloquy began in the background of his torn mind, a consciousness was shaping which told him that this man would have cut the parting shorter but for some special stimulation of his contemptuous interest in the lifeboat. And to what could such stimulation be due but to the spectacle (Newcomb admitted its crowning strangeness) of the way in which one person in the boat was taking what most would count a catastrophe to shake the soul.

Did the fact of the absence of hatred in the face of the only woman in the boat account for the something which Newcomb had little expected to find in a German U-boat captain — that slight tendency to attitudinize in the midst of his grim business, to assume the "gallant commander" air, as no man does in exactly the same way for his fellowmen. This ghastly suggestion of flirtatiousness, following hard as it did on the heels of murder, and making its obscure demand over the very grave of the sunken ship, stirred Newcomb to a pitch of fury hardly sane. And how the thought flashed through him — how was Grant taking this girl's mockery of him, mockery of all her protectors, of decency itself? And behold Grant was "taking it" — this thing done on the floor of ocean — as a man may whose head is among the stars. Poor devil! he did n't even see it, did n't even sense what the commander's insolent use of the torch showed in that circumscribed field of intense light — the girl's eyes still wide and curious.

Instead of natural loathing, of every form of moral condemnation, she was staring at the submarine commander with breathless interest, with an eagerness that might flatter any man alive.

Grant had made his way down the lifeboat, holding to this one's shoulder, steadying himself by that one's arm, his face drawn with anxiety, but for all that a figure of hope, of conciliation.

"I say," he called out, "we have n't got any provisions in this boat, and we 're — you know how far we are from land."

"Bad management," commented the German, his eyes slipping past Grant again to the face at the stern.

"Even if it is bad management, you 're not going to abandon eighteen fellow-beings in an open boat in mid-Atlantic, not *civilians,* to die of starvation?"

That did n't seem to deserve an answer.

"Who 's in charge of your boat?" was the curt demand.

Grant hesitated.

"I am," answered Van Zandt.

"Well, don't you know how to shove off when you 're told to?"

"Stop!" Julian flung up an arm. "It 's an impossible barbarity! Look!" He swung round. "You have n't seen — there 's a lady in the boat!"

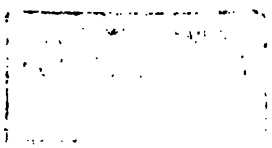
"Oh, is there?" The flash of white teeth showed in that diffused light spreading upward from the hatch. "The lady has only herself to blame."

"To blame? How is she to blame?"

"She disobeys the order."

"What order?" Grant could n't yet see he had nothing

P PERTY
F THE
K YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY



"I have a cabin below. I place it at the lady's disposal"

to hope from the man. "You *can't* abandon us," he hurried on, "not a woman, anyway, to the torture of slow starvation."

"I 'm not sure that I can." The captain's hand had gone up as though to stroke the absent mustache. When the hand came down, it showed his teeth again as he half turned toward the men behind him.

At those words, "I 'm not sure that I can," the reaction in the lifeboat was so great that, with the snapping of the tention, Grant had wavered dizzily, and Nan sprang up with a cry — a cry that Newcomb took for relief till he saw her gesture toward Julian Grant. But nearer hands laid hold on him as he called out in hoarse triumph, "What did I tell you fellows!" and fell into the place they made for him. The commander turned from some humorous interchange with his officers.

"Yes, it 's a fact, I can't bring myself to abandon the lady." He took up that position again near the edge of the conning-tower. With heels together he made a sharp inclination from the hips. "I have a cabin below, not luxurious, but more comfortable than —" he broke off with a curt gesture. "I place it at the lady's disposal."

On the lifeboat for those first seconds a silence of petrification reigned. On the submarine sounded voices — voices which had n't been heard before. For one sick instant Newcomb tried to fit those sounds to expostulation, to revolt. And then hope died, transfixed by laughter.

But the commander himself was grave, almost decorous.

"Well, what do you say?" He was looking straight at the girl. "You must make up your mind quickly. I 've wasted too much time already."

"Far too much," burst from a man's throat down below.

"Unless," the German went on calmly — "unless, as seems probable, the lady has n't understood."

No wonder that he so interpreted the lady's face, for in the circumscribed field of intense light her eyes showed wide to an incredible vision. "It is true what your own people have told you," he went on. "To stay where you are means death."

She spoke directly to him for the first time.

"And these — these others!"

"The fate of men in war," said the commander. "There is no need for you to share it."

Only the rushing sound of the water for a breath's interval till she gave him the measure of her incorrigible hope. "You 'll save the others, too!"

He checked his impatient gesture to demand: "You think they won't let you come — alone!" No wonder he persisted, for she was looking at him still with that excited hopefulness, though dashed now with bewilderment, her brows drawn together as though she were trying with all her might and main, in spite of dazzle and glare, to make out something dim and far and inconceivably precious — nothing less than an ultimate fate in man.

"I give you my word," he called out, "nobody shall prevent you."

"Yes, somebody will!" Julian shouted.

Twice fifteen hands were ready to make the assurance good. Four of them were laid to the oars. It was all over while you 'd count half a dozen, but out of those flying seconds of half-paralyzed effort Newcomb kept the memory of a lifeboat that seemed to share the mortal agitations

of her crew; a boat that for an instant — an eternity — swung under unequal oar-strokes in an oily glitter that swelled up black, polished, till it shut out the horizon stars.

As though no man had stirred, the *Leyden* captain was roaring: "What are you about? *Shove off!*" His voice thickened to incoherent cursing even before a couple of boat-hook heads crashed down on the gunwale and hauled the boat sharply back against the body of the submarine.

"Are you mad?" It was n't lost on any one in the lifeboat that the German's free hand had found his pistol as he added: "Is n't there sense enough among you to know you 're helpless? You 've only the girl to thank that I don't ram you to hell." A word over his shoulder sent two of the crew down through that faint gush of light to the deck. "I 'm sending for you."

"*Julian!*" After the guttural male voice, the high childish cry seemed to tear the quivering night in two.

Strangely it was answered. The pacifist Julian turned and flung himself upon the man at his side. He seemed to grapple insanely with the *Leyden* captain, till something in his keeping was torn out of his hand. Over their heads a shot rang out. Two sailors, about to board the lifeboat, hesitated, turned and vanished.

Newcomb was for the moment so sure it was the U-boat commander who had fired that his next impression was of a thing purely fantastic; for the figure up there against the stars, that figure inclined in a mockery of courtesy to Nan Ellis, jumped to attention; held the attitude rigidly an instant, and then, as though in pride of pose he had

overreached himself, fell back. Men sprang to catch him and darkness closed round the dropped torch.

Out of the half-crazed confusion that followed, it was hard afterward to recall anything with both certainty and distinctness except the captain's rough order to Julian, "Here, give it back!" and a pistol changed hands. Newcomb had his share in wrenching the boat-hooks from their hold and in the feverish self-defeating activity of the oarsmen.

Out of the semi-darkness on the submarine torches spouted light. Out of the turmoil on conning-tower and deck, cries of fury crystallized to a single sentence repeated in German by a dozen tongues, "Axes! Axes! Stave her in!"

The first lieutenant gesticulated madly.

"Stop rowing *instantly,* or I fire!"

"Row! Row hard! For God's sake," Grant's voice prayed, "give me an oar!"

No one heeded; the rowers rowed for their lives. Two revolver-shots rang out, and the chief engineer rowed no more.

Instead of pursuing, the submarine had darted away. She was swinging half round a circle; she was, God in heaven! what now? She was heading this way again, coming at full speed.

Newcomb brought his eyes back to the faces nearest him. They showed him only that his own sick sense of helplessness was shared, and shared the remembrance of that threat, but for the girl. To ram the lifeboat? As easy as for a child to stick the end of a spoon through the breakfast egg.

On she came; you heard the mutter of her engines. He could n't bring himself to look at the girl. For fear of meeting her eyes with knowledge in them at last Newcomb found himself turning dizzily away from all those stricken faces. In the teeth of death he remembered staring round the black half-circle of the heavens.

The very cloud-wrack was seized by fear . . . it ran scudding away from the scene. It left naked the shivering stars. Two little sounds alone in all that silence: a sobbing of water against the sides of the boat; and that other, the low mutter of the oncoming doom.

In that final rush, the blackness in which the submarine moved, curled up and fell away from her bow like black earth on either side of a ploughshare — now like earth snow powdered.

That was the last thing Newcomb remembered — of the curling white lip of the bow wave as the engine of death came rushing at the lifeboat. That and voices in the extremity of horror that cried: "Jump! Jump!"

Those who did n't were not seen again.

CHAPTER XXVII

SO long it takes to tell these things. So brief a time to happen. In eighteen seconds the submarine had gone a thousand yards, and men struggling in her wake had crowded a lifetime into a span.

Horrible as were the cries of the drowning, Newcomb's crowning fear was that they would cease. He clung to his broken grating, and strained his eyes in the changing light. Off there to left of him — not *again* the submarine! She had checked her course and swung round. As quickly as she had shot away after her murderous work was done, here, describing a half-circle, she was rushing back.

Almost at the instant of recognition of the changed course there, only a few yards off, a head, two heads, showed above the water. Newcomb remembered crying out a warning, "She 's coming back!" as the swift seconds brought the swifter U-boat and the sound of renewed firing nearer. Newcomb could see the figure of the commander jumping about grotesquely on the narrow platform of the conning-tower, and heard him calling down to the armed sailors on the deck. And all the while the commander himself kept firing, like a madman, down on the water at every head he saw. Hit or miss and on to the next. As the submarine raced by, he shot even the bits of wreckage; he shot the shadows. "Ha! da ist eins. Und da — siehst du? Noch eins —!"

Meanwhile the torch-lights and the flash, sweeping again

the farther reaches, lighted fiercely whatever they played on, and thus the intervening lanes of blackness between the lighted ridges of the waves offered momentary asylum. Up one of these dim stretches Newcomb trod water, clinging to his fragment of grating.

How long after he never knew before that moment when he sighted the moving shadow that turned into a lifeboat. A man clung to the gunwale with one hand, and with the other helped hands outstretched from the boat to draw some one on board.

"There is no r-r-room!" a voice was crying. In the midst of the passionate altercation between the officer in charge and a woman in the boat, Grant and Newcomb were hauled in and given rum.

At intervals, with his flash, the officer in charge swept the circumambient shadow. Though Nemcomb was beginning to revive, he could n't face that void. He turned to the human presences nearest him. At his side was a man the officer called Gillow, thick-set, ruddy, with close black beard and lively eyes. Among those last confused recollections on board the *Leyden* had been this fellow's running up on deck barefoot and in his underclothes. He sat now in somebody's overcoat, with a blanket muffled about his legs and feet. A child somewhere behind began to cry.

Newcomb turned to look back. The exploring light picked out a head in a close-fitting cap tied well down with a heavy veil that left the face uncovered. For an instant Newcomb met the challenging eyes of Greta.

In the bottom of the boat, dead or unconscious, lay the girl, Nan Ellis.

The night wore on, with low-voiced tales of what they had been through. Engineer Gillow told how, in the confusion of the launching, lifeboat No. 11, originally in charge of the officer of the watch, had collided with two other boats. All three were damaged, No. 11 so seriously as to be virtually useless. In the end No. 11 was n't needed, was Gillow's terse summary of what followed. It had n't been possible to save everybody; they had done their best. There was a poor devil there in the bow, a naked stoker they had picked up. He 'd had his clothes burned off by the fire in the engine-room. Assistant-Engineer Gillow himself had as narrow an escape as any; he 'd been asleep while the torpedoed ship was sinking. A rush of sea water had washed him out of his bunk barely in time, as he put it, to catch the last boat. Now he was going to catch forty winks. He folded his short arms with an air of resolution, and dropped his beard into the turned-up collar of the borrowed coat. In two or three minutes he slept. The rest sat waiting for the day.

That dawning, so passionately longed for, showed no hint of man or of his work on all the plain of ocean, not so much as a shattered thwart.

On the lifeboat itself the gray, sun-shrouded morning showed a company of eight men, counting Newcomb, Grant, and the stoker; seven women; four children, fretful from chill and hunger; and a half-grown cabin-boy. The second officer, a wiry, hard-bitten Welshman, was staring through his binoculars north, south, east, west. Hardly would he persuade himself to put the glass down when he would grip hold of it again. Up it would go to eyes that

had gleamed an instant with some new, some always futile hope.

The naked stoker had been partly clothed. He lay in a stupor of exhaustion under damp coats and sodden canvas. The gray daylight showed Julian Grant with feverish eyes, and dry lips that said, "Nan 's sleeping, too." She shared the tarpaulin which had been spread in the first place for the stoker and two children. Grant and two women, a stewardess and a passenger with a baby, occupied the seat facing the captain and the bow, facing that still figure of Nan Ellis. Miss Greta, as the morning showed, was the only woman not disheveled. Whether in the collision she had been wet at all, she looked dry now, and still rigorously buttoned up, tied down, and belted in. She was still wearing the small flat Rüch-Sak, lying high on her high shoulders, and she kept her eyes on the second officer; especially when, after he had shut his binocular case with a snap, he began to serve out rations of biscuit and water.

A child began to wail. "I can't keep him warm," said the mother. Her face was wet.

After consultation with Engineer Gillow, the second officer decided it was no use waiting for the rescue ship. He called for rowers. He called for something white for a flag of distress.

A man offered a gray sweater for the crying child on condition the mother should take off its white frock and let that be flown as a signal. The mother wanted to take the sweater and keep the white frock, too. With difficulty she was persuaded to the exchange.

Grant had roused Nan Ellis to take her share of the biscuit and water ration. She opened heavy eyes, ate, drank, and slept again the profound sleep of exhaustion.

Newcomb and Grant had been among the first to take each his turn at the oars. They kept it up in shifts all the windless day, and all day long the baby's frock signaled the distress which there seemed no eye on all the globe to heed.

Toward evening the stoker grew delirious. Out of the wrappings that concealed him he lifted a huge head, bristling with coarse, red hair.

"I know," he shouted in a Devon accent—"suffocated in the bunkers! That's it; yes, suffocated!" The giant choked and began to thrash about.

"Can't have that!" called out the second officer. "Quiet there!" The stern voice seemed to bring the man to himself for a minute. At the first sign of disturbance Newcomb had turned with an impulse to reassure Nan Ellis; but she slept on.

The eyes of the second officer came back once more from that endless interrogation of the ocean. "Boat won't stand much," he said in an undertone. "Mended one leak."

Down at his feet the red-haired giant was stirring again. He heaved, he cursed at some obstruction there under the canvas. He sat up and pulled out a block and tackle; and with it he fell to hammering at a stay.

"Open the hatch . . ." he shouted a string of foul language.

Nan Ellis started up, and turned with horror to face the incredible apparition.

"Lash him down," ordered the second officer, calmly.

It was a horrible performance. The girl hid her eyes till Grant had put her in his own place, but facing the other way, while he helped the engineer, the cabin-boy, and Newcomb to overpower the man. The girl sat crouched at Greta's side, each looking a different way. In an interval in his grim business Newcomb watched for the moment of recognition between the two, a moment strangely long delayed. Presently it dawned upon him that each was intimately aware of the other's presence and that neither meant to make a sign.

In the little breeze that at last was springing up the second officer, with help of Gillow and the cabin-boy, was getting up the sail. For the space of a good hour the boat sped over the water. At dusk the wind freshened, the sail was reefed down for the night under a sky all nimbus near the horizon, the zenith full of drab-colored cumulus moving sullenly northeast.

"It 's below freezing all right," some one said.

Another spoke of the effect of icebergs drifting down.

"It 's the time of year that happens."

"I wish it would freeze the stoker's tongue," said the cabin-boy.

An hour went by, longer than the longest day. Newcomb was dropping into a painful doze when something brought him back to a yet more painful consciousness. What was it? He was too much reduced to take the smallest initiative in finding out. He sat huddled, staring at the moon risen well above the nimbus and for the moment riding clear even of the scattered cumulus. Engineer Gillow had the watch. The second officer sat in the bow, with rigid back and open eyes. The stoker moaned.

Every one else slept or seemed to sleep. No, not the two women sitting together with eyes averted.

"I did n't know it was *you,* Nan," he heard Greta whisper.

"You knew it was somebody," came the answer at last.

"All I could think of is, he 's waiting for me! Ernst! He 's escaped. I *dare* not die while Ernst needs me."

The girl made no sound.

"Can't you understand what it means to me that he should say, 'For the sake of everything we care for, I must come and help him!' How could I think that anybody else's life mattered — when Ernst is waiting for me!"

"Waiting for you. . . . Where?"

"Oh, I shall find him — And nobody else will! 'It all depends on you, Greta'; that 's what he says. He 'll see that I 'm safe, he says, '*and happy!*' For the first time he speaks of marriage. He *needs* me!" she triumphed. "One last great service is laid upon us, then Buenos Aires — Ernst and I."

The stoker's moaning mounted to a horrible, hoarse yell. It waked the sleeping, half-numb children. They, too, screamed with fright and misery. So the hours wore on, with appeals for water, with weeping and with worse. Once the stoker wrenched himself free. They bound him again. That made him more violent than before. All the rest of the night he raved. In the morning he was gone. No one asked a question.

The sail went up early that day, though the sea looked threatening and the wind was squally. Within the hour all canvas had to be furled and the sea-anchor streamed. The lamentable figures in the boat huddled closer. Of

Greta you could hardly see a distinguishing sign, so was she muffled and surrounded. The seas rose higher and the wash came flooding in.

"Just as well they should think we get it over the gunwale," the second officer said to Newcomb. "Some of the damned rivets must have got strained."

The passengers began to crowd up, half toward the bow, half at the stern. Amidships was awash.

The hail turned to sleet, and the sleet to fine rain. In the stark misery of it the longing grew almost irresistible to jump overboard and end it all. More than one of that tragic company thought again and again: "I've come to the end. I can bear no more," not knowing yet the awful power of the flesh to endure and keep the soul imprisoned.

But the chance-made captain knew. "A hand here!" he ordered, and Newcomb helped the engineer to spread the boat-cover over the people, and to do it in spite of the icy wind that tore the freezing canvas out of one's grasp and seemed along with it to tear out one's finger-nails; failing that, to wrench one's half-frozen fingers out of their sockets. Yet at last the thing was spread and fastened. There was no one who didn't welcome it, and none to whom, as shelter, it was n't a mock. Some craned out and held the canvas so as to catch the rain. There was enough to sting, enough to chill the marrow, but not enough to drink; yet furred and feverish tongues were pressed against the moistened canvas.

Toward evening the appeals for water became demands. One of the women, a thin, febrile creature with insane eyes, grew violent. For more than one the early stages

of hushed despair had passed. Few were able to sit still. They came out from under cover with faces that made the heart shrink. They climbed about the boat in the failing light, moaning, threatening. Among the worst was the cabin-boy. It was clear he was light-headed.

"You 've been drinking sea-water," the captain arraigned him, fiercely.

The boy denied the charge, whimpering.

"I think, sir," the engineer interrupted, "the sea-anchor 's gone." The captain lashed two oars together and made another. In the early darkness the wind freshened, drenching the boat with spray.

Greta had joined in the bailing. She came up out of the stern like some hibernating brown animal of the bursa family. She worked well.

They bailed in shifts, hour by hour. The men bailed all night long. They bailed till the buckets and pannikins fell out of their swollen hands. In the small hours of morning Nan Ellis had crawled to the seat by Grant.

Another eternity went by. Slow daylight battled long with the mists of night and fog. The girl sat with her arms round the rigid figure of Julian Grant; but for that he would have slipped away like that other — Did any one know besides Newcomb of the gray head lying face downward in the wash that was sucking and slapping to and fro in the bottom of the boat?

Newcomb himself lost all sense of time in those intervals of partial unconsciousness too full of suffering to deserve the name of sleep, but he recollected the timbre of the voice that called out something inarticulate in German just before Gillow shouted, "Light! a light!"

And there it was, far away to eastward, infinitesimal, but steady, a gleam. At first it looked as if it might be the morning star shining through the breaking fog-veil, red like Mars. Then, changing like only man-made brightness, the light showed green.

The excitement among those who still were conscious bore its touch of mania. Where the captain's stern call to order might have failed, the question, "Who knows if it is n't a submarine?" sobered the most hopeful.

"Whatever it is, it 's coming nearer!" Nan Ellis cried the news at Julian's irresponsive ear. Out of the cage of despair her flagging voice soared in a rapture of recovered faith: "Light, Julian! A light!"

And now there stood out against the streak of dawn the hull and funnels of a steamer. All eyes watched that phantom ship as though for an instant to lose sight of her would be tantamount to letting her go to the bottom. They held her to her holy purpose by that thread of vision, the optic nerve. And to those passionately watchful eyes the course of the steamer had seemed to lie in a dead reckoning right across the liefboat. She *could n't* miss them. Suddenly her course diverged; she was bearing to the west! Newcomb saw the captain's hand shake as he lighted a signal, his only and most precious Coston Light. Ah, she got that! Another feeble cry went up from the lifeboat, for the steamer slackened speed, she turned. She had altered her course for fear of running the lifeboat down. Now perhaps she could see —

Anyway, eyes in the lifeboat could see — the steamer sheering off to southward. The captain and the engineer shot off their pistols. Others in the boat, not too far gone,

screamed like creatures on the rack. It was n't tragic so much as horrible. They howled like animals.

The ship went on. She faded. She was gone.

"They 're afraid it 's a trap," said the engineer. "You did n't know it, but we 're a decoy-boat, ha, ha! Signals of distress? Ha! ha! Too thin. We 're a submarine. Did n't you know?"

More than men and boats had been sacrificed in the war.

CHAPTER XXVIII

NAPIER was not yet out of the hospital when the cable came, telling the date of Julian's sailing from New York and that Nan was returning by the same ship.

Nine days after, Napier sat in his sister's London house, raging feverishly at his slow convalescence, which was n't in reality slow at all. To him, there, caught, as he said, "by the foot, like a rabbit in a trap," came the awful news — they still cried these things in streets — of the torpedoing of the *Leyden.*

He sent his man Day to Liverpool that evening to give help or, at the worst, to send back instant news. The knowledge that Sir James and Lady Grant had taken the first train on the same errand was a thought to lean on.

Yet those next days of waiting! They were followed by the news, wirelessed from the SS. *Clonmel,* which told of falling in with a handful of *Leyden* survivors among a boatful of dead. "Identities not established," it announced. That meant people too injured or too delirious to tell their names; people rescued too late, people dying.

Who could sit and wait in London? Not Napier. Within two hours of a stormy interview with his surgeon Napier was on his way.

Leaning on his crutches, he stood in the crowd on the Liverpool wharf. Among the faces all about him, fear-

darkened, hope-lit, tear-stained, or merely curious, one of them caught Napier's eye for its look of detachment. Or was it for something familiar? The blue eyes crossed his with no flicker of recognition. But when Napier looked round again, the man was withdrawing from the line of vision, and to do that was no easy matter in the crush. Was it Ernst Pforzheim, with his mustache shaved off? Napier had decided against so far-fetched an assumption before the incident was forgotten in the wild cheering that broke from the crowd, and which rose again and again, as the *Clonmel* steamed up the Mersey with its tragic remnant.

There was no glimpse of Julian among those ravaged faces, and no use, Napier told himself, no earthly use, to look for that other. Yet all the forces of body and of soul met in the concentration of his scrutiny from end to end of the slowing ship.

No, she was n't there. Napier's right hand tightened on the bar of his crutch. He leaned an instant against the shoulder of his servant, feeling the dreaded onset of that dizzzy sickness which comes back upon men who have had a touch of gas. Still, he was master enough of himself to notice that the captain moved a little as he put up his hand in recognition of some one on the wharf. Then Napier saw her — or *was* it Nan?

The face, with the scarf wound round it, was like a mask. Lines, features, the pale *brune* coloring, were there; but where was Nan?

A second cheer had gone up from the docks as the *Clonmel* made fast. The crowd surged forward, shouting questions about the fate of certain Liverpool stokers and sea-

men. The police intervened, and opened a lane as the first passengers came down the gangway, hatless, unshaven, in borrowed clothes. Women in the crowd below, crying out names, questions, had to be held back by main force. "Let the passengers land first!" And still the cries went up, one sharper than all the rest: "Is Jimmy O'Brian saved?"

The pressure was relieved about the gangway when Nan, one of the last to land, had reached the wharf. She stood with those vacant eyes of hers on Gavan's crutch instead of on his face.

"You — wounded!"

He had not shaped the words, "Where's Julian?" and yet she answered him. "Julian is dead. The rescue people buried him — at sea."

Napier tried ineffectually enough to shield her from a man with a note-book, volleying questions.

While Napier and his man, with the girl between them, slowly made their way through the throng, Napier told her she must take over the rooms he had engaged.

"You won't be able to travel for a day or two," he said.

She stopped short at that, and began to look about with those unseeing eyes. She was "*quite* able to travel." She "must travel." She was going to Scotland.

A chill gripped Gavan's heart. Was she delirious?

"Anywhere you like when you 've had a few days —"

"A few days? I can't wait a few days. *She* can't wait — Julian's mother. I 'm going first to her."

An immense relief swept over him. The mind was there, the faithful, loyal mind.

Napier watched the sailor take the inquirer over to the guard. The guard proved amenable. In a moment the stranger with the square back had passed up the gangway. No detectives were with him; he had gone on board alone. If it was n't Ernst Pforzheim, it was some mustacheless individual extremely like him in feature, and as unlike as a seedy bowler, shabby clothes, and a slouching air could render the smart young gentleman of Glenfallon Castle. What did it mean?

The same question seemed to have occurred to a reporter who observed from a distance this case of flagrant favoritism. He was further rewarded for his patience by seeing presently the sailor who had been tipped beckoned by a steward from the top of the gangway. The reporter came strolling along the now nearly deserted wharf. He coasted gloomily round the piled-up luggage, looking at the labels. When he had passed out of Napier's range — suddenly voices!

Napier shifted his position again. Two men who had given no sign of life before were being asked some question by the reporter. One of the pair caught Napier's eye. Singleton! Napier's chilled blood ran swiftly. It *was* Ernst, then, who had gone on board! And if he did n't come back, if he was for escaping to Ireland, Singleton and his companion would search the ship. Plainly Singleton was trying to get rid of the reporter. Whatever was afoot here, it was not desirable to have it in the papers. The secret-service man and his companion, who looked as if he might be a plain-clothes policeman, turned a cold shoulder on the reporter, and suddenly fell back in the direction of Napier. Suddenly the reporter darted out from the

shadow of the luggage and stood hovering near the gangway. The sailor and a steward were bringing down a shrouded figure in an invalid chair — a lady, you might think, if you did n't strongly suspect it to be Ernst doubling on his track after getting wind of Singleton waiting down there behind the luggage. When quiet had descended on the wharf and the ship was searched, Mr. Ernst would be far away.

"Put the lady down." Singleton's companion had planted himself in the way of the little procession, his coat turned back to show the police badge.

"Go on, I tell you!" The voice that came shrilly out of the veils was bewilderingly unlike the one Napier had been waiting for. The rest was mere pantomime from where he sat. The veiled head turned and seemed to catch sight of Singleton. Whereon the invalid darted out of the chair and ran with extraordinary fleetness down toward the warehouses.

When Gavan had pulled himself up on his crutch, he saw in the middle distance Singleton's companion and the reporter running along the wharf, while some yards further on, a squat, petticoated figure struggled fiercely in the arms of a fat policeman. Hat and veil were torn off, and Napier had an instant's glimpse of the face of Greta von Schwarzenberg, horrible with fear. The next instant she had succeeded in drawing back far enough to lift her foot, and to launch at the policeman a totally unexpected blow in the belly. Stark astonishment, as much as anything, sent the man stumbling back a couple of paces. The woman darted past into a region of piled barrels, casks, and cases, policeman and reporter in pursuit. Napier had fleeting glimpses

of a game of hide-and-seek, grotesque in spite of the fact that it was played with passion, Greta appearing, disappearing, the others hot on her track, Greta tearing off scarf, ulster, and jacket as she ran, and casting them forth for her pursuers to catch their feet in. The policeman again fulfilled her hopes, but in vain was the net spread in sight of Singleton. He it was who at the most critical moment headed her off from the street. Back she doubled toward the water and was once more lost to view.

"If it was anybody else," Napier said, struggling to a balance on the well foot, "I 'd say she had n't a dog's chance."

"No, sir," the returned Day remarked obligingly as he steadied the crutch.

Owing, Napier afterward learned, to police orders in connection with the apprehension of a passenger off the *Clonmel,* the Euston train was still in the station. As Napier hobbled along the platform, Singleton and one of the ship's officers went by, making hurried inspection of each carriage. One door they opened revealed a man lying out at full length on the seat. As he raised his head, Napier recognized in the changed face Hallett Newcomb. The *Clonmel* officer asked if his late passenger had seen anything of "the lady, the older one."

Newcomb shook his head. He 'd heard she was going on to Ireland.

"So did we," said Singleton. "We sent a man on board to induce her quietly to change her mind; but that woman 's the devil. Simply vanished into air, or, rather, *I* believe she dived." All the same, they went on with their examination. Napier meanwhile had his bag brought into Hal-

lett Newcomb's carriage. The fruitless search for Greta ended; the train was allowed to proceed.

On that journey back to London Napier heard through what the survivors of the *Leyden* had lived, to what Julian had succumbed.

In those next days Nan lay in that house in Berkeley Street where she had helped to nurse Julian back to health. Napier sent or telephoned daily to inquire for her. "Great care, complete quiet," Lady Grant wrote at the end of a week. "Not easily or soon will she shake off the horror of that voyage and of Julian's death."

Napier was the less prepared for Singleton's visit, a few days later, hot-foot from Berkeley Street. Singleton had, as he said, hunted up Miss Ellis "as a last hope." Oh, yes, he 'd seen her.

"She 'd been on the point of sending to you to get my address. What I hoped she 'd tell me, I 've come to doubt if she knows. I want your opinion on that. I see now I shall have to go warily." Singleton drew his chair closer to the fire and held out a hand to the blaze. There was not wariness only in the fine eyes, but the passion of the quest, and behind all a suppressed excitement, new in Napier's knowledge of the man. "For months," he went on, "there 's been a leakage at the War Office."

Yes, Napier knew that. What he did n't know was that Schwarzenberg had been the one to make first-hand use of the leakage. Singleton had come to believe she 'd engineered it. However that might be, "*there 's* leakage still."

Napier caught the infection of Singleton's excitement.

"Can't Ernst get to the bottom of it — with the lady's kind help?"

"*Her* help? After he'd let her into the Liverpool trap?" inquired Singleton with scorn for such innocence. "Ernst, poor devil, won his release from Miss Greta, when he'd got her into our hands." The secret-service man studied the fire, frowning. "I did n't get what I went for, but I 've had a rather curious interview with your American friend. She 'd been looking at back copies of the newspapers. The library, where she was lying, was half snowed under with newspapers. Been poring over accounts of the torpedoing and the rescue. But she had n't been able to find anything about Greta, not a breath. 'Well,' I said, 'does n't that mean there 's nothing to say?'

"'Only something to keep dark?' she suggested. Oh, she 's no fool! She sat up and looked through me. I explained that all I meant was that Schwarzenberg might n't be of such general interest as she imagined. She thought that over a moment, and then she said something that astonished me a good deal, given the terms Newcomb tells me they 'd been on. 'If it is n't known where Greta is,' she said, 'that 's bad all round.' I asked, 'Why, all round?'

"She would n't answer directly. 'To be able to vanish like that,' she said. 'It 's true, then; you do some things badly over here.'

"'Undoubtedly we do.'" Singleton smiled again as though recalling a compliment paid the British service.

And then he owned that she had very nearly bowled him over the next moment by saying: "'You don't happen to know where Mr. Ernst Pforzheim is?'

"'Pforzheim?'" Singleton had echoed feebly with his

vacant, uninterested look. "'What makes you think of Pforzheim?'

"'Because wherever Ernst Pforzheim is, we'll find Greta.'"

Singleton smiled at her: "You're clear off the track. Pforzheim was arrested ages ago and locked up."

"But he escaped; Greta told me so."

"Well, he has n't escaped, so make your mind easy about that."

She lay silent a moment, turning it over in her mind: "But if she did n't find Ernst, what *did* she do?"

Singleton seemed not to know the answer to that.

The girl sat up with startling suddenness: "'I thought I 'd ask you first,' she said.

"'And second?'

"'I shall have to pull myself together and find out if *somebody* does n't know where she is.'"

Singleton asked, "Why?" As she did n't answer that: "Is there any great hurry?"

"Well, there is," she admitted, with a nervous clasping and unclasping of her hands. "I can't say any more, but the authorities have got to know."

"To know —" He waited.

"That Greta ought to be found."

"And when she *is* found?" Singleton inquired innocently.

Her answer evidently cost her something. "She ought to be sent out of the country."

Singleton suggested the futility of that had been proved.

"That 's why, that 's why!" She clutched the silk

coverlid. "The people who know how to deal with these things have got to know. Though for *me* to have to tell them,"— her eyes filled —"it 's an awful thing!"

He saw a way to ingratiate himself.

"I think I can save you that," he said.

"Can you? *Can* you? Oh, I 'd be endlessly thankful!"

"I did n't say that *nobody* knew where to find the lady. Lord, it made her sit up straighter than ever."

"I was right, then," she said. "I felt you 'd be the one to know. But you are keeping back something. Mr. Singleton, what has happened to Greta?"

He told her nothing very serious had happened as yet.

She lay back on the cushions an instant, with her chin up and her eyes on the window cornice.

"Then — I 'm — not too late," she said.

"Too late for what?"

"Where *is* she?"

"I did n't tell you I could put my hand on her," he said. "I told you, very privately, of course, and as a great — the greatest — mark of confidence, that there were those who could."

"Well, I 've got to be one of them," she said in her short-cut American way. When she saw he was n't going to notice that observation, she went on: "Ever since I got better, I 've lain in the room up there waiting for a letter from her." She had said it precisely as though her last encounter with the Schwarzenberg had been one of ordinary friendship. "I telegraphed Lady McIntyre to forward any letters, and she has. Not a thing from Greta."

"No, I dare say not," Singleton had answered.

"But why do you 'dare say not'?" Anxiety settled on her face again. "You make me all the surer of what I've been feeling so strongly that I can't sleep. Greta is in terrible need of help. All the more because of what she's done."

"And do you imagine, if she were in need of help, she'd turn to you?"

"Oh, quite certainly."

Singleton hadn't been able to repress the rejoinder: "It's a good thing, then, she *can't.*" He wasn't the least prepared for the sensation by that innocent utterance.

"She *can't!*" The girl had risen, and the silk coverings fell about her feet as she stood there with frightened eyes, saying under her breath, "*Why* can't she?"

He did his best to soothe her. "You've just admitted you wouldn't have her free to carry out her designs."

"No! no!" She dropped weakly on the edge of the sofa and sat leaning forward: "Not free to do harm, but surely she is free to write to a friend?"

"I wouldn't, if I were you, be heard calling yourself a friend."

"I *was* a friend," she said. "How far can you go back, once you've been an intimate friend?"

"You have never been a friend, intimate or otherwise, because you never really knew the woman." And then he told her — not the details of the struggle on the wharf, the escape at risk of drowning, and the two days' pursuit of one of the most notorious spies in Europe. He told her merely that Miss von Schwarzenberg was under detention during his Majesty's pleasure.

When he had done so, he devoutly wished he hadn't.

"Instead of helping us to find out who the woman's accomplices are," he complained to Napier, "your Miss Ellis will be worrying us about the woman herself."

Then Singleton developed the idea that had come to him after leaving Berkeley Street. Might n't it be possible to get the all-important clue out of Schwarzenberg herself by means of the Ellis girl if the authorities could be persuaded to give her access to Miss Ellis?

Napier was quite sure when his visitor left that Singleton was convinced of the hopelessness as well as the inadvisability of that device. Napier thought the less about what he characterized to himself as "the fellow's crazy project," because his mind was occupied with endless speculations about Nan.

A sentence in a letter which came the next day in answer to one of Napier's, shed a certain light. "Don't you, too, feel that I must tell Lady Grant how things are before I see you here? I have n't the strength for that just yet." She went on to say she 'd seen Singleton and she had since tried to get more definite news through the authorities. "But you won't want to hear about Greta, though I must just tell you that Mr. Singleton has been very kind. He 's found out she 's a Prisoner of the First Class. That 's so like Greta, if she was to be a prisoner at all!"

In his uneasiness Napier managed, two days later, to get Singleton on the telephone. He was told in a voice with impatience of "the stupidity at H. Q. which persisted in blocking the unceasing efforts of that girl to get permission to see the Elusive One. I 've advised your friend"—Singleton's laugh came metallic along the wire—"to ask *you* to get her the permit."

"She knows better," retorted Napier. Something seemed to go wrong with the line after that. He did n't get Singleton again. Singleton was greatly occupied about that time.

As a special, indeed an unprecedented, concession, a permit was ultimately obtained for an unnamed lady to pay a visit to a person designated only by the Number 96 in a metropolitan prison.

Singleton did n't show Miss Ellis the permit until he had talked to her for some minutes about the superhuman difficulties that had to be surmounted before he had been able to get their request so much as listened to. He had sworn not to yield up the all-powerful piece of paper without exacting a pledge from Miss Ellis. She was to promise on her word of honor that she would n't let the Schwarzenberg know who had moved in the matter. This was of an importance he could not explain to her, but it was "the condition."

CHAPTER XXIX

"WHERE are we now?" Miss Ellis peered through the blurred window of the taxi.

"Oh, it's a part you don't know. You have n't an idea," Singleton began again, "what a triumph it is — this permit. Nobody believed it could be brought off. And you are to see her alone! What do you say to that?" He sat back in the car and looked at Miss Ellis.

"Is it so unusual?"

"Unusual! Bless my soul, it's unheard of! The rule is, either you stand outside a grille and talk through bars, or you sit with a table between you and the pr — the person you've come to see. The warder, or in this case it would be the wardress, stands there, two feet away, hearing every word you say and watching your hands to see that nothing 's smuggled."

"They behave like that to prisoners in the first class?"

"If a prisoner is dangerous, she has to be watched, whatever class she 's in. As a rule."

"I see. In this case they trust to our honor."

Singleton hesitated.

"A — yes. It 'll be an immense relief to her to have some one she can talk to freely. I would n't be surprised — you see, she 's bottled herself up so long — I would n't be surprised if she took you more into her confidence than ever she 's done yet. I 'd be careful if I were you," he said

with unusual earnestness, "very careful not to discourage that confidence."

"I don't think it the least likely she 'll take me into her confidence," the girl returned on a note of regret, not daring to admit the thrill that ran through her at thought of being the chosen confidante of a prisoner — a Prisoner of the First Class, above all, of the erring, the wonderful Greta. Nan was the freer to speculate about her now that the pain of cutting the woman out of her heart was eased. To serve one who had been her friend would satisfy every canon. If it satisfied a hitherto unquenched curiosity as well —

"You could n't make a greater mistake," Singleton was saying with that new earnestness of his, "than to discourage any confidence.

"Oh, I would n't, not for the world I would n't discourage her."

"*Do the other thing,*" he said impressively in her ear as the car stopped.

"Are we there?" Nan started up in excitement.

"Wait a moment." He let down the window and put his head out to speak to the driver. The car turned in the gray light and went on a few yards.

"Tell her you 'll take any message to her friends," Singleton suggested to the girl over his shoulder.

"Her friends?"

He was staring out at glimpses of stone wall. "I should say "— he spoke in his most detached manner —" I should say, you 'd have a rather interesting half-hour, particularly if you let her unburden her soul on the subject of her — allies."

The car stopped. Singleton got out, and rang a bell. The car was drawn up close against a massive gray wall. Just beyond was a great iron-studded door. In a moment it opened. A man stood there who looked to the irreverent eye like the jailer in a comic opera — a big, saturnine man with an enlarged waist (or an enlargement where his waist might have been), and round this great girth of his a broad belt with the largest keys hanging to it Nan had ever seen out of a pantomime. She asked afterward if they were real keys. She thought that, like the halberds of the Beef-eaters, they must be symbolic, "just to impress on people the degree of the locked-upness they 'd got to expect here." As to the jailer himself, he, like his keys, was "too good to be true." He was n't only like an actor. His forbidding manner, his black-avised scowl, and gruff voice, had for the eyes at the car window exactly the same air of unreality as the keys. To Singleton's horror, she confided presently that it was all she could do not to applaud and call out of the window, "*Is n't* he doing it well!" with the mental reservation that really he was overdoing it.

The basso profundo with the keys stood frowning at the paper Singleton had presented.

"Is she here?" demanded the jailer.

"Oh, yes, I 'm here." Nan nodded and beckoned at him out of the window. He gave her a yet more frightful scowl, and she nearly burst out laughing as Singleton, in the act of helping her out, saw, to his consternation.

The scowling giant showed them into a bare little room with an open fire and a chair in front of a table, where a big book like a ledger lay open. Between table and fire

was a telephone; all round the walls were benches; nothing else.

The basso profundo left them there in front of the fire. A warder passed the door with a man in prison clothes who was carrying a bucket. The warder spoke to the man. What he said was not intelligible, but the quality of voice struck the light-minded smile from Nan Ellis's face.

"How he spoke!"

Singleton said he did n't notice anything unusual, but he was rather relieved that she had stopped smiling. When the head jailer came back, he had a wardress in tow. The jailer did n't speak, did n't even look at the two waiting.

"This way," said the woman, and led Miss Ellis briskly down a long stone corridor. Another wardress stood by a door slightly ajar.

"Be quick," she said to some one inside. "I can't wait here all day."

"She speaks just as the warder spoke to the man with the bucket," Nan thought. "Does anybody speak like that to Greta?" They would n't do it twice, she decided, even before the reconciling phrase "First-class Prisoner" recurrred to her. She imagined Greta turning these wooden women into human beings with a lash of her tongue.

Going up the skeleton stairs Nan broke the echoing silence. "Does Miss — the lady know I 'm coming?" she asked in a low voice.

Stolidly pursuing her way, the wardress looked straight in front of her for so long, Nan thought, as she told Napier afterward, that the woman was n't going to speak at all. But when she had sufficiently marked the fact that she

was n't there to answer questions she said, with that same hard tonelessness, "I don't know who 'd tell her." Through more corridors they passed till the wardress stopped just short of an open door and rang a bell. A younger woman of the same type came round a corner.

"Tell ninety-six she 's to come down," Nan's guide called out, but she went to meet the other wardress, and the two stood talking a moment. They seemed to resent the visitor's inquiring eyes. "That 's where you go," said the older one over her shoulder. Nan found, to her surprise, that the direction was addressed to her, with a curt motion of the head toward the open door. As she entered, the door closed behind her. Nan's heart began to thump. "What if they take me for a prisoner, and no one comes to put them right!" she thought. Her spirits had been steadily sinking ever since she heard the warder speaking to the prisoner with the bucket. Mr. Singleton had been wrong. Even for a prisoner of the first class this was a terrifying place. She remembered something she had read once that a captive in the Tower had said centuries ago, "'T is not the confined air; 't is the Apprehension of the place." It was just that. The atmosphere was thick, choking with apprehension. How long "96" was in coming down! On reflection, it was almost consoling that after that rough message Greta should take her time. Nan rested on the confident faith that, when Greta came, the Apprehension would lessen, if not vanish altogether, vanishing before that dauntless step.

This room was even barer than the other: no fire, no open book, no telephone; only a long, narrow table down the

middle, several stout wooden chairs, a window heavily barred, nothing else. Sounds outside came muffled, and the more charged with Apprehension for that. What was happening?

The door opened. A glimpse of the tall wardress shutting herself out and shutting in a squat figure clad in shapeless gray serge garments and a foolish cap.

Greta? *That?*

The girl held her breath, held all her being back from admitting that the apparition by the door *could* be — For it was n't the disfiguring dress alone or chiefly, that in the first instant had paralyzed the visitor's tongue and rooted her where she stood. Greta, yes. And they had clothed her body with ridicule. But what had they done to her spirit? There was a horror about the change that overtopped pity, for that awful first moment, while Greta stood, grotesque, dreadful, not so much looking at the girl as looking through her, looking out of eyes too haunted by other shapes to take in an apparition so insignificant as Nan Ellis. Even when Nan was able to move forward, "O, *Greta!*" was all she could say, but she held out her two hands.

The changed woman had n't even one to offer.

"What have you come for?" she said in a queer voice.

"Why, to — to see you."

"To see what I look like. Well, you see."

"O Greta!" The girl shrank as if the other woman had struck her. After a quivering moment she added, "I came to ask if I can do anything."

"Who sent you?"

Nan knew now what was the matter with the voice: it

was purged of personality. Greta spoke like the wardresses, in a tone out of which all modulation had gone.

"Nobody sent me," said Nan.

"No, of course not."

"I *swear* to you, Greta, you 're wrong if you think — nobody wanted me to come. I 've had to move heaven and earth, I had to beg and beg —"

"Beg who?"

"Why, beg — no, I was n't to say that. It does n't matter now. But it 's been more difficult than you can think. I gave them no peace. I *had* to see you."

"Why?"

Nan felt guiltily that Greta had guessed that part of the answer was because of a consuming curiosity. What Greta would n't, could n't, know was the pain and compassion that swept the girl after her first moment of recoil.

"Why?" Nan repeated. "Because of — what used to be." Greta seemed not to hear. The girl was so aware of this that she raised her voice a little and spoke with deliberate distinctness. "I did n't know if you had any one you could depend on."

"You *do* know. I was fool enough to tell you."

"Only Ernst!"

The fierce instinctive warning in Greta's face against utterance of that name, changed to contempt:

"But they 'll have got that out of you before you came here. Much good it will do them." And then she found the strangest ground for triumph. "He can take care of himself. They learned that at Liverpool. And because he can take care of himself he can take care of me. If only" — her voice fell huskily —

"If what!" The girl's self-possession broke. "Oh, you are living on the wildest hopes! You must in a place like this. I can see it 's terrible to you to be here! But *how* terrible is it?" In the silence she collected herself. "No, you may n't want me to know that. Tell me only what can be done."

Greta walked to the window, a strange shambling gait. She looked out and then turned round, but not to face Nan. The strained eyes went carefully all around the room. As she turned sidewise, the gray light fell more merciless on the ravaged face, above all on that patch of discoloration under each eye; no mere violet shadow such as Nan had seen on the faces of the sleepless or the sick. This was as if a muddy thumb had set a deliberate smudge under each eye, and as if the printing of that broad, brown stain had been done with so ruthless a pressure that it had forced in the lower arc of the socket. The eyes made careful circuit of the room. They inspected the ceiling. They scoured the floor. Then Greta bent down and looked at the under side of the table-top. She looked with absorbed attention at the chair before she sat down in it — all signs of mental aberration in the sight of the speechless girl, just as was the loud, toneless voice in which Greta said:

"I suppose they 've sent you to get out of me what they 've failed to get."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, you don't know what I mean?"

"Greta! Greta!"— the girl dropped into the chair opposite and leaned across the table,—"if I can put away hard feeling and suspicion, can't you? I don't ask you to be friends outside this place. I don't *want* that any more.

But can't you for this little time we have here together just let me help you if I can?"

"How do you propose to help me?"

"It is n't for me to propose how. I don't know what you need."

Again those eyes made circuit of the room.

"What I need?" the hoarse voice repeated. So humped her figure was that it gave her an air of crouching in the chair. The quick turning of the head (all the rest of the body rigid), to look first over one shoulder, then over the other, had in it, taken with the crouching attitude, something animal-like. But the intensity of that listening was not given to the voices in the corridor. Those voices seemed rather to reassure, almost to soothe; for as they sounded nearer, she repeated quietly, "What I need?" Moreover, she looked at Nan as if she really saw her, as if she remembered who she was. "I sha'n't need anything long."

In the eyes bent on her across the table tears sprang up. "Are you so ill, Greta?"

The woman made no answer. She was listening again. It seemed to be the silence that spoke to her, not voices.

"That 's one of the things I thought of," the girl went on. "I might get them to let me bring a doctor."

"It would be a great doctor who should cure *my* ill!"

The words were despairing enough and spoken faintly, but that touch of the old theatricalism was so much more natural than the hoarse, uncadenced speech alternating with the insane listening to nothing at all, that Nan took heart. "May I say you are ill? May I try —"

Greta shook her head.

"What 's the use? I 've always known I should n't live long. We don't."

For a moment Nan could n't speak. As to Greta, whatever she had come through, whatever she was going toward, she had n't got beyond enjoyment of tearing at another's heart-strings on the way.

"You must n't say, must n't *think*, you are n't going to live! You must remember —" Nan longed and did n't dare to quote the precedent of the old father in the Berlin brewery, still watchman of the night, as Singleton had told her. She was the more glad she had n't ventured to speak of him when she presently found that Greta's "we" linked her to no blood kin. She had sunk down farther in the chair, a huddle of coarse serge and misery, and her hands slipped off her lap and hung at her sides.

"The strain is too great," she said under her breath, speaking the truth at last.

The strain *was* too great. It had broken the Greta of old days. And just as, after the wreck of some great liner, only trifles are left floating over the grave of the Titan, so the woman's surface theatricalism survived the loss of more considerable things.

"With people like us, our hand is against every man," she declaimed in a husky voice, "and every man's hand is against us."

"That 's not true. My hand is n't against you."

"We shall see."

"*Indeed* we shall!"

Greta had made an effort to pull herself up and face the girl more squarely, as though that call to "see" had imposed some change in the focus of vigilance.

This was not the visit she had been expecting. It had taken her unaware. With a new self-distrust, an unwonted slowness, she was collecting her wits and her physical forces, without for an instant losing sight either of the obvious danger or the possible unique opportunity presented by Nan's coming. To seize the occasion to recover some of her hold over the girl — that could endanger nothing. It might even serve.

"If you must believe," Nan was saying, "that my hand is against you,"— barb-like, the phrase had stuck, quivering,—"you need n't think everybody's hand is."

"With the exception of that one, whose is n't?"

The question was awkward.

"Well, there are your friends." She waited while Greta's eyes arraigned her fiercely. "And there are the people who, from their point of view, owe you so much."

"You mean —" Greta waited warily.

"Those who set you on. The people you 've run such awful risks for."

"Oh, the powers in Germany! They 'll trouble themselves about me!" Her ghost of a laugh was more horrible than cursing. Some of the dullness went out of Greta's eyes for a moment at sight of the impression she was making on the girl. "You think, if we make a single misstep, 'They' spare us?" The slack hands came up and met in a hard grip on the bare table-top. "They set us superhuman tasks in the midst of strangers. A *woman*, set to play a lone hand against overwhelming odds, day in, day out. No let up. One false move,"— the locked fingers parted, the hands were lifted a few inches, and fell

heavily on the board,—"you are first suspect. Then you lose your liberty. Then you lose your life."

"No! no!" The fascination of horror that had held the girl broke before that evocation of the final doom. "You must n't be afraid of that! You *must n't* —"

"What do you know about it?"

"I am sure, I am sure —"

She ought to have been satisfied with the degree to which she had wrought upon the girl. But that was n't Greta's way. It did n't suit her that any knowledge of intended clemency should dull the poignancy of Nan's compassion.

"You think I 'm afraid I 'll lose my life *here!* Pfui!" She forced out breath too contemptuous to lend itself to word in that first emission. "It is n't my life these creatures want. I 'm no good to them dead. I 'm no good to them alive if they had the sense to see." She flung it to the wall over Nan's head.

"Oh, if you *knew* how you 've relieved me! Greta! Greta! I would n't let myself be afraid of the worst. And yet, deep down,— since I came into this room — I have been afraid. Thank you, Greta, for taking that horror off my mind."

It was n't at all what Greta had intended. She looked at the girl.

"A person like me," she said, with an effort at that high air of old,— oh, the piteous travesty! —"a person like me, who is supposed to know too much, if she does n't pay with her life — it is n't always the fault of the people she works for."

"I don't understand," Nan breathed.

"Probably not. We ourselves don't 'understand' till it 's too late. What idea had I, when I began, that every hour of my life I should be saying: 'Is it to-day? Will it be to-morrow I shall go under?' We mostly do go under when we 've served our turn."

There was the ghost of the old satisfaction in the marred face as she read in the young one how well the old trick worked. "Be very sure it is n't our enemies we fear most. It 's those you call our friends."

"You can't"—Nan gasped—"you can't mean the German authorities who — ask to have these things done?"

"Oh, can't I?" She positively revived before her manifest success. "One of my own friends was let in for an English prison by a German agent acting under orders from the Wilhelmstrasse. My friend has n't come out. He never will come out. Two others I knew, one a woman, made the mistake of knowing too much, and paid the penalty."

"The penalty!" whispered the other.

"They"—Greta stared in front of her—"they disappeared." Her fixed eyes moved. They came back to Nan. "You imagine my friends were set against a prison wall and had their account settled by an English firing squad? Oh, no! We in the service"— with the old arrogance she threw back her head, crowned by the horrible cap—"we know we have no such need to fear any foreign power as we have to fear our own."

Nan failed lamentably to respond to this form of professional pride. "It 's a ghastly trade."

"You don't know what you 're talking about," Greta said harshly. "The best brains in Europe are at this

work. Ask your friends of the British secret service."

"There 's a difference between the secret service and spying."

"Oh, *is* there! Then it would take a Jesuit to find out and a fool to believe. We are all in the same business. Only the other nations play at it, and we work. No questions with us, no limits. You others, yes, all of you,"— she flung it out,—"you paddle. We? We 're up to the eyes!" Her own, marred and mud-stained, were lifted to the opposite wall. "We 're *over* the eyes!" she triumphed. "We hold our breath down there under the surface till we crack our lungs. And smug people judge us! People who have never done even a safe thing to serve their country — they judge *us* — who face death hour by hour!"

"You don't, Greta, anyway." Nan Ellis had her pride, as it seemed, though its roots were deeper than nationality. "Lucky for you, you 're in England!"

"England!" Her face as she turned it away was hideous with hatred.

Nan stood up. "Though you refuse to be, I at least can be glad that in England they don't —"

"Oh, don't they!" She clutched at the edge of the table and leaned across it. "I 'll tell you what the English don't do. *They don't talk about what they do.*" As Nan opened her lips, the other raised her voice to the level of a hoarse scream. "But there 's a thing they don't understand — your friends the English. They imagine they can wear us out. *Hein?*" Again she addressed an invisible audience, still believing, as Nan thought, that she was under the ceaseless observation that had turned her wits.

"These *English!* They think they can force a German woman to sell her friends, to give away her country! A German! I tell you"— she staggered to her feet —"these devils can go on as long as ever they like. I don't know why they stopped —"

"Stopped? Stopped what?"

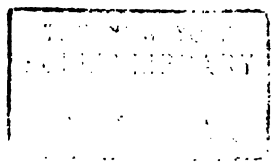
"Torturing me," she said, gutturaling the r's till they sounded like the tearing of a fabric. "'Who is my friend in the War Office?'" The words acted on her swifter than poison, more like the twist of a knife in a wound. She opened her mouth and gasped for air. When it came she cast it back in a cry that was n't human.

Nan shrank against the wall. A bell clanged.

"'The name of the man in the War Office.' Forty times he asked me that, that devil they sent to tor-r-tur-re me." She was speaking too rapidly to swallow; the saliva gathered in bubbles at the corners of her lips. "Every sort of question! Every sort of trap! Insinuating; gentle; quick, sharp as pistol-shots. Over and over and over and over, till you long to die. Then at last, when *he 's* worn out,— not I! not I!"— she cried to the walls,—"then I 'm led away, back to my punishment cell,"— she staggered and caught blindly at the chair back —"and the board bed is soft as a cloud in paradise. Two minutes. The wardress! 'Come, they want you.' I 'm taken back. 'The name of your friend in the War Office?' and *da capo*. You see the plan? *Hein?* The devils in hell must envy the inventor of that Third Degree."

The thing itself comes out of the Dark Ages, but the phrase was framed in America. Nan had heard it before. This method of procedure was contrary, perhaps is

"The name of the man in the War Office!"



still contrary, to English law; but there was no more doubt that Greta von Schwarzenberg had been subjected to the Third Degree than there was doubt of its fearful effect.

"Surely they know it 's possbile not to answer," the girl said, bewildered.

"Oh, they *know!*" Greta had fallen back into that hoarse whisper. "It is n't in nature not to answer some things — to answer something that sounds innocent; that gives you a rest; or to answer something dastardly. Taunts — God! the things they say! Oh, you 'd answer some of them as long as you could keep your wits and wag your tongue; and then —" She beckoned. Nan came to her round the table. Greta seized her by the shoulders, and with so fierce a grip the girl, in a new access of horror, tried to draw back. Those big, square fingers held like a vise. Greta bent her trembling, froth-flecked lips to the girl's ear. "They don't let you sleep. That 's what does it — if anything will." She did not so much let go her hold as fling Nan from her as she raised her voice to its highest pitch. "Not even that is going to make Greta von Schwarzenberg a tool of the English. Never!" she flung to the right wall. "*Never!*" she screamed to the left. "*Never!*" She choked suddenly, fell sidewise against the chair, and dropped heavily to the floor.

Nan ran forward with a cry. The door opened, and a couple of wardresses rushed in.

As they raised Greta up, she pointed down the corridor. "Ha! you see? You see?" The backs of two men were disappearing in the distance.

"You have failed again!" Greta shouted after them. "Always you 'll fail!"

The wardresses quickly had her on her feet. They handled her with a respect so scant that Nan broke in:

"Let me, please! Oh, gently!"

"She 'll show you the way out." The tall wardress nodded curtly at the other.

Greta shot out a hand and clutched Nan's sleeve. "You wanted to help me? Then find a way to see *him*. Say as long as it 's *for him*, nothing can break me."

"I 'm going to get them to send you a doctor," the girl cried.

"Come." The tall wardress seized the disheveled figure by the other arm.

Greta seemed not to know the horrible cap was falling off. "I 'd rather have you, after all, than any doctor." She still maintained that fierce hold on Nan. "Specially now that I know you 're as"— that laugh! —"as silly as ever. Oh, why could n't I be *selig*, too!" Her drooping lips quivered. She fell to feeble crying. "I *wanted* the good things. More than any one in this world I wanted — since I was little I 've wanted to get away from ugliness and evil. I wanted to be a lady. *Ai!*" she shrieked. "Damn you!"

The younger wardress had slipped round behind the others. She had thrust a hand in between Nan and Greta and loosened the prisoner's hold by some sly use of pain.

Greta turned on the woman.

"Damn you! you —" words from which Nan fled shuddering along the corridor, a wardress at her heels.

CHAPTER XXX

SINGLETON had spent a great deal of time on the case. He staked much on that meeting between the two women. In his disgust and rage at the Schwarzenberg's self-control under all her surface emotionalism, her shrewd conviction that the interview did not lack auditors, spoiled all his plans.

He had as good as pledged himself. "Shut those two up in an empty room," he had said to the chief, "and you 've only to turn on the tap."

And behold Greta, with a watch set on that tongue of hers, talking tosh, and entirely content to work on the feelings of that little fool!

"She is delirious!" Nan caught up with Singleton and a strange gentleman in the lower corridor. The strange gentleman hurried on and was lost to sight. She was too excited at the moment to wonder how Singleton happened to be in the corridor or to notice his black looks. Breathing quick and hard, she said, "Greta is delirious!"

"Oh, *is* she?" She elicited no more till they were getting into the car. Nan asked Singleton to tell the chauffeur to drive to Whitehall.

"Whitehall?"

"Yes, to the Intelligence Office."

"What for, in the name of —"

"We must get her a doctor."

"They have a doctor here."

"Not a proper doctor. You ought to see the condition she's in. We must go to your chief and get him to allow —"

When he'd spoken to the chauffeur, he followed her into the car, slammed the door, and relapsed into moody silence.

Above the profoundly stirred deeps a trifle rose to the surface.

"I thought," she said, "prisoners of the first class could wear their own clothes."

"Well?"

"Miss von Schwarzenberg was in prison clothes."

"Then it's her own fault. She started first class."

"How could it be her own fault? You don't think she would *choose* to wear such —"

"She chooses to give trouble." Singleton relapsed again into silence.

What had happened to Mr. Singleton after she left him? It struck her from time to time that the man, who had been so sympathetic — nearly as keen for the meeting as Nan herself, once his objection had been overcome — seemed to take strangely little interest in the issue. This knowledge marred and certainly shortened the account she gave him. She found herself dwelling mainly on what Greta had told her about the third degree. Singleton's silence got on her nerves.

"What do you say to their not letting her sleep?" She waited to hear him deny the charge. "You don't think they'll ever try that again?"

"She'd much better have talked freely to you." It was n't the coldness of the reply that struck the girl so much as the latent menace in it.

"Why should you have wanted her to say more?"

"Well, did n't *you?* I thought you were for the Allies."

"So I am."

"After my persuading the chief it was better to let you do the job unconsciously, then you go and"— with a gulp of bitterness Singleton swallowed his too unflattering opinion of what, precisely, Miss Ellis had gone and done. Only one count in the long indictment slipped out: "To forget even to press the question of the friend in the War Office when Schwarzenberg had broached it herself — to let slip a chance like that!"

"How do you know I let it slip?" came from the dark corner.

"Well, *did n't* you?"

"I have n't told you so." There was a moment's silence. "How did you know?" the girl repeated.

"Well, how do you suppose I know?"

No word out of her for the rest of that awful drive till she saw they had reached Berkeley Street.

He apologized for not going to Whitehall. Too late. Everything shut up.

"I 'll go and see the chief to-morrow and let you hear," he declared.

He scribbled a note that evening, reporting to headquarters:

"No result yet. Particulars given to-morrow."

Singleton did n't sleep much that night. He made up

for the loss in the morning. Before he was dressed a message summoned him to the chief.

At Whitehall he learned that Miss Ellis had been waiting there that morning before the doors were opened. She had sent in her card a good hour and a half before the chief arrived, but she refused point-blank to see any one else. The chief passed her waiting there in the hall. He had her in.

"You ought to hear the chief!" Singleton said grimly to Napier that afternoon. Singleton himself had enjoyed the privilege of "hearing the chief." She had come "to demand an extension of privilege for that woman, a doctor and so on."

The chief talked with her long enough to make up his mind she was no good for the business.

"He did n't spare her, I 'm afraid. He says she cheeked him. Can't imagine it, can you?"

Napier could n't say.

"Well, I said he must have misunderstood. I reminded him she was an American. The chief says in one breath she told him he was inhuman and in the next demanded a permit to take a doctor to the prison.

"'Oh, I know,' she interrupted, 'you 're going to say they 've got a doctor —'

"'I beg your pardon, that was not in the least what I was going to say.'

"'What, then?'

"'I was going to say, why should she have any doctor at all? Your friend,' the chief told her, 'has it in her power, so Mr. Singleton imagines, to do us some little service. If she won't, what 's the good of her? Whether she *could*

do us this particular service, since that is n't what you 've come about, we 'll leave unconsidered. What there 's no doubt about is her power to do us harm. Your friend has got to be suppressed.' And he shut that mouth of his like a steel trap.

"'Suppressed!' She stared at him. Can't you see her? '*Suppressed?* How?'

"'Ah, that 's been the problem. Not with *me*. I 've known from the beginning there was only one way.'

"'Only one way? You mean to murder her?'

"The chief blinked several times at that. He has n't got over blinking yet, by Jove! He says she went straight from there to the American embassy. Before she got any one to see her, the ambassador had been telephoned to. So that 's all right; but *my* chance is gone. Schwarzenberg is to have her final hearing on Thursday."

"Is it likely to go against her?"

"Likely? Sure."

The butler came in with a folded half-sheet of note-paper on a tray. Napier opened it.

Get rid of him, please, Gavan. I will wait. N. E.

Napier put the note in his pocket.

"Say I 'll be there in two minutes."

As he opened the door, he faced the Messenger standing there in the middle of the room with wide, scared eyes.

"O Gavan!" She fled into his arms.

He held her there against him in the corner of the sofa till she could speak once more. Every now and then she

broke out crying afresh as she told in incoherent fragments what that last horrible twenty-four hours had brought of knowledge, of anguish, of loathing.

"I've come to get you to help poor Greta and"— and she took for granted he'd do that—"to help poor me."

"Help you, my darling?"

She gave that quick nod.

"You must please do something for me and do it quickly." Her eyes went to the clock. "Forgive me for not being able to take the time to explain it all, but they — the Government of your country — is likely to"— she caught her breath, and the voice sank—"to do the most horrible thing, a thing you must prevent." In the silence she leaned forward the better to see his face. Plainly it made her anxious; she looked away with that fold between the brows. "I've just found out," she went on in a half-whisper—"it's no hearsay! — the authorities consider that Greta was caught 'red-handed,' as they call it. There's no time to go into that. It does n't matter—"

"Does n't matter!"

"Not now. Oh, don't look like that!"

She put up her hand and drew her finger-tips down across his face.

He caught at the wrist and held her while he talked very quietly. There was no trace of exultation over the "enemy" woman who had served him so ill and served his country worse. "But we can't, to salve our private feelings, leave a person of that sort—"

"*Whatever* she's done, you can't let her be killed,

Gavan! Gavan, you can't! Not a woman who was my old friend."

"*Don't!*" he cried out. "It 's more than I can bear to hear you calling her your friend. Of course you are horror-struck —"

"I am more than horror-struck; I 'm haunted. I 'll be haunted all my days unless you — O Gavan,— if you 're sorry, take me out of this nightmare!" As he tried to draw her to him again, he felt her shuddering. "It is n't horror only. I 've been through vileness, too. It 's all clinging about me. I 've seen a man making use of holy things for hideous ends. I 've seen a woman broken by torture. I 've seen —" She jumped up, with a hand dashed across her wet eyes —"If you can't *do* something, if you let Greta be shot, I shall never sleep again. I shall go mad."

"Hush! hush! Don't you see that if I were to do everything in my power, this business has gone too far? I am as helpless as you, as helpless as she."

"You can't say that till you 've tried — tried everything. If you 'll only *try!*"

Without her saying so, he felt that to have tried to save that wretched woman, even to have failed, as fail he must, would count for something. Whether it would count enough, who could say? There are games you can't play with imagination and memory. Well out of his reach, she was watching him with an intensity that held her breathless.

"What you suppose I can say to the authorities, feeling as I do, *I* don't know."

"I know." She came a step nearer. "Make them see that Greta can do them one last greatest harm of all. Oh, she 'll have the best of it yet if you don't do something to stop them! Can't you see?"

He shook his head.

"Well, just think! They 've got her absolutely in their power. *That 's* an awful responsibility. They can do what they like with her. They think she can't retaliate any more, but you show them she can. Oh, she 'll have her revenge if she can goad them into being cruel! I thought I was asking you to do something for my sake, for our two sakes, when I came here. But I see now you 'll do worse than make me miserable as long as I live if you let them — kill Greta. You 'll be doing a bad service to England."

"You mean," he said, "that because she 's a woman —"

"Let *them* think that if they like!" She watched him hobble to the bell. "Oh, kind and dear —"

Two days Gavan spent seeing people, pulling strings, arguing, urging. Unblushingly he used his friends, he pledged his credit. He had never worked harder in his life; and then, to save their faces, the authorities said they had never intended the death-penalty for the woman. In England they did n't, and so on.

Napier took the news to Berkeley Street that same afternoon.

"But understand," he stood up before Nan's chair, leaning only on his stick, "it 's right to tell you, no power under heaven will make me either in the near future or the far future, *nothing* will make me raise a finger to have that woman set free."

"Free! Oh, no, she can't be allowed free."

"Very well," said Napier, relieved; "just so you understand."

"She 's lost her right to freedom."

He looked at her.

"And you don't think death is better?"

"Yes, death is better for Greta, but not for us. I mean, *we* could n't do it, nor let it be done as vengeance. That is n't for us."

His eyes followed her. "Where are you going?"

"Going to push the little sofa to the fire. It 's bad for you to stand."

While he waited, not offering to help, just looking at her, a servant came in.

"Mr. Singleton, Miss, on the telephone. I 've connected this one." The servant went out.

Nan went up to Gavan with a harassed face. She did n't want to talk to Mr. Singleton. "Could you, do you think —"

She left him at Sir James's writing-table, and went back to make the cushions comfortable.

"Oh, you 're speaking for her, are you?" Singleton said. "Well, you can tell her, then, that the play is *ausgespielt.*"

"What do you mean?" Gavan's voice was sharp. "They did n't go back on their word?"

"No, no; and she took the finding of the court this morning gamely enough — death-sentence, commuted to imprisonment for life. They let me see her a minute before she was taken back to her cell. Game? Never saw anything like it, till I proved to her that Ernst was acting for us. *That* got her! But when they came to take her

away, she was quiet enough. 'Tired,' she said. Thought she'd sleep at last. 'Rather a strain, these last days.' When they went in with her food — dead."

"What? Say it again."

"*Dead!*" Singleton repeated.

"Heart?"

"Not a bit of it. You remember my saying to you at Lamborough that we'd found everything except a pinch of white powder? She had it all right. Jove! I wish we had one or two to match her!"

Gavan hung up the receiver and turned back to the figure at the fire.

NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE END